MONACO GP AND INDY 500 SPECIAL

AUTOSPORT

BRITAIN'S BEST MOTORSPORT WEEKLY

2 JUNE 2022

Perez wins one of *those* crazy Monaco GPs

- How Red Bull snatched Leclerc's glory
- What went wrong for Ferrari this time
- Russell pips Norris in battle of the Brits

PLUS

+ Ericsson takes dramatic Indy 500
+ Cook stars again in BTCC at Thruxton

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Red Bull's popular support act comes out of the shadows

Being Max Verstappen's team-mate is no easy task — just ask Pierre Gasly and Alex Albon. Just a week after Sergio Perez had to move aside for his Red Bull leader in Spain, the Mexican put in one of the finest drives of his 220-race Formula 1 career to win the Monaco Grand Prix.

Perez's third world championship race victory was well-deserved. Yes, it took some strategy errors and bad luck for Ferrari, as Alex Kalinauckas shows in our in-depth report (page 14), but Perez was strong all weekend. He outqualified Verstappen, didn't make a serious mistake in tricky conditions, and withstood pressure from Carlos Sainz in the closing stages (*surely* the Spaniard will win soon...). No wonder he was re-signed until the end of 2024 as Autosport closed for press.

The big Monaco loser, of course, was Charles Leclerc. Quite aside from this being a track at which Ferrari had a small advantage, Leclerc seemed set to end his home jinx. He looked imperious around the streets in the dry — and in the wet early in the GP. But he didn't pit early enough to make the most of the intermediate tyres, nor did he stay out long enough to switch straight to slicks, as Sainz did. Having to stack behind his team-mate in the pits ensured he fell to fourth.

While Monaco threw up one of its rare unpredictable races, the Indianapolis 500 also provided plenty of drama. David Malsher-Lopez reports on how Scott Dixon was *once again* denied and how Marcus Ericsson held his nerve for a famous win for Ganassi (p30).

Kevin Turner
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9 JUNE

Le Mans 24 Hours preview
Our 52-page guide to the 90th running of the greatest enduro

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Clive Rose/Red Bull

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Top F1 teams fear budget cap will force them to miss races

FORMULA 1

Formula 1 looks set for a row over the budget cap, with a number of teams pushing for an increase because they cannot stay under the $140million maximum for 2022.

A dramatic rise in inflation and freight costs this year has put team budgets under pressure. Red Bull team boss Christian Horner suggested that the scale of the problem was serious enough for teams to have to potentially miss races if they did not want to risk a breach.

"I think we need the FIA to address the inflationary issue," said Horner. "Probably about seven of the teams need to miss the last four races to come within the cap this year, from the consensus that there has been up and down the paddock.

"It's not just about the big teams now, it's teams in the middle of the field that are really struggling with the inflationary rate that we're seeing, and that could even get worse in the second half of the year."

Discussions have taken place with F1 and the FIA to try to come to some form of agreement to lift the budget-cap limits, but not all teams are in favour of such a move.

Ferrari team principal Mattia Binotto said at last weekend's Monaco Grand Prix that if the budget cap remains fixed at its current level, then his team would have no option but to bust it. He reckoned that Ferrari would then fall into the remit of what is known as a 'minor' breach of the rules — so within 5% of the limit — for which there is no fixed penalty.

F1's rulebook states that minor breaches can include a public reprimand, loss of drivers' and constructors' points, suspension from events or a reduction in aero testing or future budget-cap limits. That means teams face uncertainty about whether or not overspending will materially affect their results on track.

Asked what will happen if the budget cap is not increased, Binotto said: "I think that there will be no way for us to stay below, so I am pretty sure at some stage we will go over. What will be the most important is many teams will breach it and I think that will be simply bad for the financial regulations. If we are breaching the financial regulations, then I think we will start debating if the financial regulations are working, and it will put everything back in discussion."

Horner added that Ferrari was not alone in not being able to stay under the limit, and that he fears that the end of the year could be marred by intense debate over sanctions for breaking the cost cap. "What we do need is clarity and clarity quickly," he said. "Quite simply, it's not right we should be held to ransom by a couple of teams who aren't perhaps affected. That was never the design of the budget cap. The budget cap was there to limit the top teams from a spending frenzy. None of us could predict when we came up with the budget cap figures the world events that are driving inflation."

But some of the smaller teams took a dim view on the matter, including Alfa Romeo, whose team boss Frederic Vasseur said that the bigger squads would simply need to scale back their development plans. "If we have some increase on energy or freight, the solution is to switch off the windtunnel

…but Vasseur argues that teams must cut their cloth accordingly

SUTTON

FERRARI QUICK THINKERS SAVE POLE

FORMULA 1

Charles Leclerc avoided a potential penalty that could have jeopardised his Monaco Grand Prix pole position for missing the weighbridge thanks to the quick reactions of his Ferrari team.

The Monegasque had been called in for a weight check towards the end of Q2, but did not see the signal and pushed on down the pitlane. Had he gone to his Ferrari garage and the mechanics worked on the car, that would have been enough to earn him a penalty for breaching the rules.

SUTTON

Ferrari quickly spotted that Leclerc had missed the signal and instantly ordered him to stop. The mechanics then ran up the pitlane to push him back for the checks, which were passed without problem.

Leclerc confessed that the letoff had been totally down to his Ferrari team because he had not spotted the stop sign, and actually didn't even know where it was.

F1's rules are strict when it comes to drivers missing the weighbridge and teams working on the cars. At the 2019 Azerbaijan Grand Prix, Pierre Gasly had to start from the pitlane after missing a weight check in practice and Red Bull worked on his car, while the same happened to Sergio Perez at that year's United States GP.

JONATHAN NOBLE & ALEX KALINAUCKAS

BINGHAM

Binotto is worried that his team will bust the cost cap…

and stop bringing updates every single weekend," he said. "We are in the situation where sooner or later we have to stop the development of the car, because we will be at the limit of our budget, and I think everybody can do the same."

Vasseur's view was shared by Alpine team principal Otmar Szafnauer, who said that the impact of inflation was accounted for in forecasts for this year and the subsequent impact on development. "We're still within it, even though freight was a little bit more expensive than we thought," he added. "We're still under the cap, and we plan to be there at the end of the year, and we'll adjust the development accordingly just like Fred said. I think it can be done. Where there's a will, there's a way. We set a budget cap, and we should stick to it."

JONATHAN NOBLE & LUKE SMITH

P14 MONACO GP ACTION

TEE

Ricciardo deal not watertight

FORMULA 1

McLaren Formula 1 boss Zak Brown has admitted that Daniel Ricciardo's contract with the team does not bind him to the end of its current length.

Ricciardo has scored points in just one out of seven races so far this season, leading to growing speculation about his future with McLaren, particularly after Brown said in an interview last week that the Australian had not met the team's expectations so far this year.

Ricciardo is in the second year of a three-season deal with McLaren, but Brown revealed that there are "mechanisms in which we're committed to each other and mechanisms in which we're not. I spoke with Daniel about it. We're not getting the results that we both hoped for, but we're both going to continue to push."

Ricciardo has repeatedly said that he has no concerns about his McLaren future, adding that he and the team were "working together hard at it" to turn things around this year.

Highly rated Arrow McLaren SP IndyCar racer Pato O'Ward has been tipped as a potential future F1 driver, and the Mexican signed a contract extension with the team last week to run until the end of 2025.

LUKE SMITH & DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

Toyota considering second Le Mans Hypercar project

LE MANS HYPERCAR

Toyota is evaluating building a replacement for its current Le Mans Hypercar. It is looking to take advantage of regulations that allow it to homologate an all-new car within the lifecycle of the current ruleset.

Sources have revealed that the Japanese manufacturer is already well advanced with a successor to the GR010 HYBRID introduced last year. What is not known is whether it is eyeing an introduction of the new car in 2023 or 2024.

Toyota is refusing to comment on its plans, as usual. It always plays its cards close to its chest when it comes to technical developments: it refused to confirm that it was switching tyre sizes on the GR010 for 2022 until February this year. "We will release details of our 2023 programme, including technical details of our car, after the end of the current season," said a spokesman for Toyota Gazoo Racing Europe in Cologne.

The reasoning behind the move from 13-inch Michelin tyres all round to 12.5in fronts and 14in rears for 2022 offers an insight into why Toyota believes it needs a new car. A series of changes to the LMH rules as the process of aligning the new category with the LMDh prototypes coming on stream next year came late in the GR010 programme.

TGRE technical director Pascal Vasselon said that the rule shift in May 2020, when both the weight and power figures for LMHs were reduced, compromised the weight distribution of the GR010.

"The minimum weight was reduced by 70kg and our roll-out was planned for July, so our car was designed and in production," he explained ahead of the start of this season. "The weight distribution went out of control and did not suit our car anymore to the 13/13 tyres. So we had to change to put the correct tyres at the right place just looking at the weight distribution. This was the main trigger."

Vasselon explained that the shift of the deployment speed for the GR010's front-axle hybrid system for this year was of lesser importance in its decision to change tyre sizes.

Toyota would not be able to revert to its initial choice of tyres. A change in the rules for this year means that only cars homologated before the end of 2022 can run the 13/13 option, one chosen by Peugeot for its 9X8.

Neither would it be permitted to build an LMH with a rear-axle hybrid as has been suggested. The rules as they stand say that an LMH prototype must run a front-axle motor generator unit if the manufacturer opts to build a hybrid. Only road-based LMH machinery is allowed an MGU at the rear if there is one on the base road car.

An introduction of a new Toyota LMH next year would give the car at least a three-year lifespan. The category is confirmed to the end of 2025, but it is expected to be extended until the end of 2027 to bring it in line with LMDh.

GARY WATKINS

F1 aims to group races by region

FORMULA 1

Formula 1 is planning to group more races by region in 2023 in an effort to improve its sustainability credentials by reducing freight movements and personnel travel.

While F1 has talked in the past about consolidating the calendar by region, it has now decided to actively press ahead with the move. As part of the plan, it is understood that the Azerbaijan Grand Prix could be grouped in a run of races with the Japanese and Chinese events, although the Shanghai round's status remains unclear due to the country's COVID-19 situation.

Another option could be to pair Miami with Montreal, which will mean that one or the other will have to move from its 2022 date by around a month. Monaco's traditional end-of-May slot reduces F1's flexibility at that time of the year.

The Middle Eastern races could also be paired, with Bahrain and Saudi Arabia together at the start of the year and Qatar and Abu Dhabi towards the end.

F1 is also set to go ahead with plans to introduce calendar alternation in the coming years, with the French GP looking set to be part of the system, but series officials have made clear that they will not lose focus on the European heartland.

"We don't want to lose the interest of Europe," said F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali (below). "We were born here, and we will stay here. I hear a lot of comments that are not true. The beauty of the situation we're living in today is that we have a lot of options. And we're going to make the right decision, thinking about the strategy, thinking about the DNA of the sport, thinking about how every promoter wants to be involved with us."

ADAM COOPER & JONATHAN NOBLE

M-Sport eyes LMDh future

IMSA

Era Motorsport's ORECA is a mainstay of IMSA LMP2 class this season

M-Sport is gearing up a return to sportscar racing in the IMSA SportsCar Championship this year with an eye on a Le Mans Hypercar or LMDh programme in the future. The British organisation is in the advanced stages of putting together a programme to join the North American series in LMP2 before the end of the season.

A team that masterminded Bentley's GT3 project with two generations of Continental racer — it developed the car and ran a factory team — wants to accrue some prototype experience as sportscar racing moves into its new era with the arrival of LMDh next year. It could have an ORECA-Gibson 07 up and running in IMSA as early as the Watkins Glen round at the end of this month.

M-Sport is planning to link up with the Era Motorsport IMSA squad. It would piggyback on Era's infrastructure and lease a car from it, but the entry would be run under the M-Sport banner and with its own crew.

"This is a great way to get some prototype experience under our belts," said team boss Matthew Wilson, son of company founder Malcolm. "We all know what is coming in sportscar racing — it's going to be a golden era — and it is something we want to be involved in with some kind of factory deal or perhaps on the customer side. I'd hate to be talking to someone about a programme and them to say, 'But M-Sport doesn't have any prototype experience'. We want to tick that box."

M-Sport has been looking to return to sportscars as a race team since the end of its factory programme with Bentley in 2020, Wilson explained. He said IMSA makes sense because of an existing relationship in rallying with Era.

Wilson stressed that the programme is yet to be finalised. He said that a debut at Watkins Glen remains a possibility, but that the team is fully expecting to be on the grid for the Petit Le Mans series finale at Road Atlanta in October.

GARY WATKINS

Meeke to stand in for Button from Lydden

RALLYCROSS

Five-time World Rally winner Kris Meeke will replace 2009 Formula 1 world champion Jenson Button at three Nitro Rallycross rounds this season.

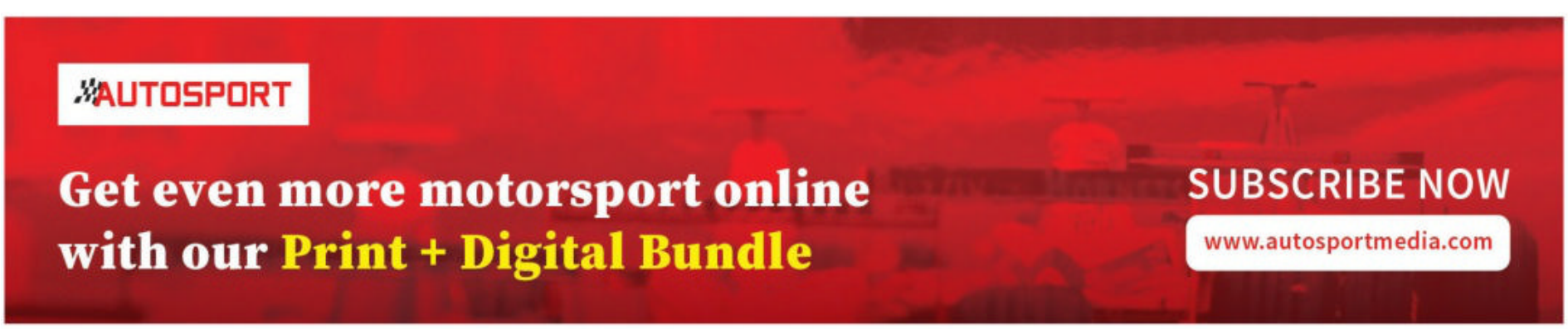
Meeke, who has been on testing duty for Skoda's WRC2 efforts this year, will contest the British, Swedish and Saudi Arabian rounds while Button is unable to compete due to prior contractual commitments. He will fill in at the opening two rounds, including Lydden Hill on 18-19 June, before Button starts his campaign at the Finnish event on 27-28 August.

Meeke will join Xite Energy Racing team boss and driver Oli Bennett for the trio of rounds after testing the electric Nitro RX's FC1-X car in Barcelona earlier this year.

"When Oli contacted me, I was really interested in every aspect: the team, the car and the championship," said Meeke. "When I tried the car, OK the conditions weren't perfect and it was very wet, but you could immediately see the huge potential not only with the car, but with the whole series that Nitro Rallycross is creating."

Meeke's only experience of wheel-to-wheel racing is a sole European Rallycross outing at Loheac in 2013. "Rallycross is probably the most similar to rallying — albeit with more cars around you," he said. "Racecraft is a big thing which I openly admit I don't have much of."

HAYDN COBB



Donington GP back on BTCC schedule

BTCC

The Donington Park Grand Prix Circuit will be part of the British Touring Car Championship in 2023 for the first time in 21 years. Series organiser TOCA revealed its schedule for next season on Tuesday, with Donington hosting two of the 10 rounds for the first time since 2001.

The East Midlands venue has secured the 'floating' second date that was awarded to Thruxton for 2021 and 2022. TOCA chief Alan Gow explained that the decision to hold a round on the GP loop continues the series' desire to use alternative track layouts when possible — a second Silverstone date was planned for 2020 using the International circuit for the first time, only for this to bite the dust in the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We had the opportunity to go to Donington twice next year, so rather than use the same layout twice we wanted to use the GP circuit," said Gow. "It's the same when we go to Brands Hatch Indy and GP.

"We haven't been there [on the Donington GP circuit] for a long time, but everyone remembers Gabriele Tarquini up on two wheels at the chicane in 1994! It would be a bit silly not to use the GP circuit. It adds something different to the calendar, and it's got a nice balance to it — a nice spread."

The Donington GP date takes place on the August Bank Holiday weekend, four months after the traditional round on the National Circuit, which as in 2022 kicks off the schedule in late April. The GP layout last hosted a round of the BTCC in 2002, when the series finale featured a win and a first title coronation for James Thompson (above) in a Vauxhall Astra Coupe, and a victory for Alan Morrison in a Honda Civic Type R.

MARCUS SIMMONS

BTCC CALENDAR

ROUND	VENUE	DATE
1	**Donington Park National**	22-23 April
2	**Brands Hatch Indy**	6-7 May
3	**Snetterton 300**	20-21 May
4	**Thruxton**	3-4 June
5	**Oulton Park Island**	17-18 June
6	**Croft**	29-30 July
7	**Knockhill**	12-13 August
8	**Donington Park GP**	26-27 August
9	**Silverstone National**	23-24 September
10	**Brands Hatch GP**	7-8 October

Arm surgery could sideline Marquez until 2023

MOTOGP

Six-time MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez could be sidelined for the rest of the 2022 campaign.

The Spaniard announced at last weekend's Italian Grand Prix that he would be stepping away from racing for the foreseeable future to undergo a fourth major operation on his right arm. Marquez badly broke his right humerus in a crash in 2020 and has struggled with it ever since he returned to action last April.

The Honda star, who had admitted that his career had maybe two more years at most in his current condition since he is not enjoying racing, will have surgery in the US this week to correct the rotation in his right humerus and stabilise his right shoulder. Marquez was informed last Friday between practice sessions at Mugello that the operation could go ahead.

No recovery time has been given, but it is likely that Marquez will be sidelined for the rest of this year. As Autosport went to press, Honda had yet to announce his replacement, although it is likely that HRC test rider Stefan Bradl will deputise. The German did so in 2020 when Marquez sat out the season.

LEWIS DUNCAN

GOLD AND GOOSE/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Piquet, Raikkonen in returns

ELMS/NASCAR

Nelson Piquet Jr will return to international competition in the European Le Mans Series next year with United Autosports. It will be his first major programme outside of his Brazilian homeland since being dropped by the Jaguar Formula E squad halfway through the 2018-19 season.

The 36-year-old (above), who is in his fifth season in the Brazilian Stock Car Championship this year, will share an LMP2 ORECA-Gibson 07 in the 2023 ELMS with Andy Meyrick and Daniel Schneider. He has raced together with 48-year-old amateur Schneider in endurance races in Brazil, but was unable to partner him when he started racing an LMP3 Ligier-Nissan JSP320 in the Le Mans Cup on the ELMS bill in 2020 because the series forbids platinum-rated drivers. As a result, Meyrick came in to partner him for a programme that is continuing this year.

Team boss Richard Dean said: "Nelson is good friends with Daniel, and I met Daniel through him. Nelson always said that he wanted to drive with his friend when it became possible."

NASCAR RIDE FOR 2007 F1 CHAMP

Kimi Raikkonen will make his first racing appearance since retiring from Formula 1 when he enters a NASCAR Cup Series race at Watkins Glen on 21 August. The 2007 F1 world champion will join Trackhouse Racing to drive a Chevrolet Camaro ZL1. It will be his first race since he called time on his two-decade F1 career last December.

Raikkonen has history in NASCAR. He took part in one Nationwide Series round (below) and one Truck Series race in 2011 during his sabbatical from F1. "What comes after that? I don't know, nobody knows," said Raikkonen. "We'll try to do a good race there and enjoy it. I have no other plans."

GARY WATKINS & HAYDN COBB

SOUTH/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

IN THE HEADLINES

BERNIE ARRESTED FOR GUN

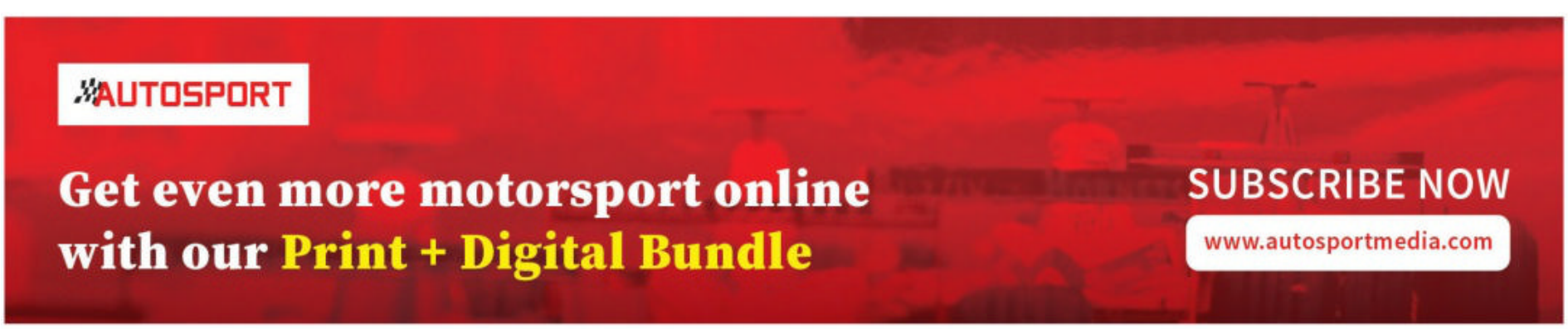
Police in Brazil arrested ex-Formula 1 chief Bernie Ecclestone last week after a handgun was discovered in his luggage at an airport. Ecclestone was about to board a private jet on a flight to Switzerland from Viracopos in Campinas when an unloaded pistol was discovered during x-ray screening. He was not carrying any ammunition. The 91-year-old was detained at a police facility at the airport before being bailed after paying R$6060 (£1010), according to a statement from Policia Civil. He then flew to Switzerland. It's reported locally that Ecclestone admitted owning the gun, which he keeps on his farm in Brazil, but was unaware of its presence in his luggage and didn't have the requisite documentation for it.

FOSTER WINS ON OVAL DEBUT

Briton Louis Foster has taken the lead in the Indy Pro 2000 series following a win on his oval debut at the Indianapolis Raceway Park short track last Friday with Exclusive Autosport. The 2021 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award finalist applied relentless pressure to Enaam Ahmed to take second place, before hunting down and passing leader Reece Gold. Foster's fellow Brit Ahmed lost a further place to finish fourth behind Josh Green.

RNF GETS APRILIA DEAL

Malaysian MotoGP team RNF will become Aprilia's first satellite team in MotoGP next season. The Italian marque has completed a two-year deal, with an option for two further seasons, with RNF, which will therefore cut its ties with existing supplier Yamaha. Meanwhile, the Aprilia factory team has confirmed that it will retain Maverick Vinales and Aleix Espargaro for two further seasons beyond the end of this year. Espargaro sits just eight points off the series lead following his maiden win in Argentina, and is on a run of four consecutive podium finishes.



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How Perez struck back

Mexico's most successful F1 driver put his Spanish troubles behind him in emphatic style in Monaco, as he properly begins to find his feet at Red Bull

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

"It's a massive day for myself, for my country." What a difference a week made for Sergio Perez. From a team-orders row in Spain and questions on him ever getting a fair crack at what is perceived to be Max Verstappen's Red Bull squad, to the top step of the podium at the Monaco Grand Prix. Now with a new Red Bull contract until the end of 2024, he is also Mexico's most successful world championship Formula 1 driver, heading 1960s-70s star Pedro Rodriguez with three victories to two.

There was a certain ambivalence towards what Red Bull did to Perez at Barcelona. It risked wrecking his morale, but Red Bull's choices had a cold, hard logic. Too often he has qualified down the order, allowed slower cars to slip in between himself and Verstappen, failed to beat key rivals or lost ground early in races. He'd leave himself open to being exploited, and was in Spain.

But what a response in Monaco. Perez started the event by patiently answering questions about the Barcelona team-orders saga when he faced the press on Friday, and it's worth noting his long-standing professionalism and willingness to prioritise his teams and their staff. This is, after all, the driver who took legal action against his own Force India team in an effort to save it. That risked reputational damage, but Perez prevailed — only to be unceremoniously dumped by Lawrence Stroll's Racing Point ahead of its Aston Martin rebrand. But he landed in the perfect position at Red Bull, and his victory tally since joining now matches the total the former Jordan team has scored this millennium...

"There's simply no reason for Red Bull to even consider disrupting its driver alliance"

Perez's performance in Monaco was sparkling from the off. He cut far from the browbeaten figure we suggested in these pages might appear following his Spain snubs. In scoring the results he did last weekend, Perez managed to make Verstappen look distinctly average — and that is quite an achievement.

There were several key reasons for this, including the very nature of the Monaco GP itself. First, the Red Bull package was understeering considerably around the Principality. Verstappen, with his penchant for a strong front end that means his sheer overwhelming talent will tame the resulting oversteer and still be rapid, spent practice and most of qualifying trying to dial it out. His lack of car balance meant "you can't attack the corners" and he was fine-tuning Red Bull's adjustments throughout qualifying.

Verstappen still wasn't happy come the final runs in Q3, and his team-radio tone suggested the decision to attempt a push-slow-push programme had a hint of desperation. Perez knew he needed just one run at the critical moment of the weekend.

Perez's Q3 crash also cost Verstappen, given he'd just gone only 0.1 seconds slower than the flying Charles Leclerc in the first sector. And adding up all the best sectors all the drivers produced in qualifying would have had Verstappen second on the grid behind his title rival. Starting fourth, especially when the rain came down and the FIA ordered a safety-car start, Monaco's tight confines and processional nature, meant he was essentially trapped in a situation where he could look no better and his team-mate would come out on top. How high Perez climbed was largely down to Ferrari letting Leclerc down, although of course the 32-year-old did still have to seize the moment and win the grand prix.

Whatever result Verstappen might have scored had Perez not crashed in qualifying will never be known . But F1 does know how good Perez was in Monaco, and he is now deservingly listed among the exclusive club of winners of the championship's hardest and most prestigious race. How many more will get the chance to add their names seemingly depends upon the Automobile Club de Monaco and F1 agreeing new commercial and operating terms before 2023.

As well as thriving with the RB18's understeer last weekend, Perez bounced back tremendously from his Q3 error when other drivers might have suffered a major confidence knock. His Monaco triumph sits alongside his excellent Jeddah pole and likely lost win there. He just needs to remove the more regular low moments, which made his life harder at Imola and in Spain.

Red Bull is adamant that Perez has raised his level in 2022. It puts that down to a fundamental difference from last year. Simply explained by Red Bull chief engineer Paul Monaghan, the RB18 is a car "that he can drive" even if it's "not always to his liking". That's a big step from 2021, when Perez struggled to go his own way on car set-up and needed lengthy simulator sessions to start to get closer to Verstappen's level late in the year.

The last ultra-high-downforce Red Bull had been built to suit Verstappen's preferences, and Perez just had to cope with it. That task did for Pierre Gasly and Alex Albon at the crack Red Bull squad, but Perez, while not ultimately at one with the RB16B in 2021, did enough to back Verstappen up to a maiden title. Shining as he is now in Red Bull's first ground-effects car, it comes as little surprise that the team will not move to alter the Verstappen/Perez alliance until at least some time in 2024.

P14 MONACO GP REPORT

World tin-tops' '2005 Indy'?

Tyre issues meant the WTCR's Nurburgring races were cancelled last weekend, drawing comparisons with the 2005 United States Grand Prix

DAMIEN SMITH

The decision to cancel the World Touring Car Cup races last weekend on the Nurburgring Nordschleife because of Goodyear tyre safety fears, just 15 minutes before the first, couldn't be anything other than painful, costly and humiliating for everyone with skin in the game. But it was the right call, or more accurately as Honda's William de Braekeleer put it, "the least worst decision".

You could say this was an 'Indianapolis 2005 moment', but let's keep some perspective. Back then at the US Grand Prix, on one of Formula 1's darkest days, the 'race' went ahead despite Michelin-shod teams feeling compelled to withdraw at the end of the warm-up lap, leaving just six Bridgestone runners to take the start. If that was the definition of travesty and farce, this fell well short. Instead, it was just desperately unlucky. But between Goodyear, promoter Discovery Sports Events and the FIA, something much worse than embarrassment might have been side-stepped.

Tiago Monteiro was among the six who raced at Indy, finishing a bizarre third for Jordan, and he should have been on the grid at the Nurburgring too, in his Engstler-run Honda that was one of many affected by the tyre problems. "This is out of our control," he said. "We have an extra 60kg on the car [compared to rivals], it's a fact we are heavy and it's probably not helping. I'm very upset about it. It's not good for the show, but it's very dangerous for us as drivers. We have to think about safety first. I have been in a tyre drama in F1 and it played my way at the time. But you can't play with this."

"It was definitely the right decision. You don't know when your tyre might delaminate"

"It was definitely the right decision," said de Braekeleer, race programme manager for Honda Racing Corporation, who compared the prospect of racing to "Russian Roulette: you don't know when your tyre might delaminate".

Of course, there's a difference between cancelling a GP in front of a packed house and a massive global TV audience compared to a touring car race that falls below the radar even for ardent motorsport enthusiasts. But make no mistake, to scale, the WTCR's loss is significant, especially now. The Nordschleife round is one of WTCR's signature events, and to face a force majeure cancellation at a time when grid numbers have fallen to just 17 and after two years in which the series has been limited to Europe because of COVID-19, is... unfortunate. To put it mildly.

Publicly, the series' customer teams and five manufacturers that supply and support them presented a reasonably united front. But as the Hondas and Lynk & Cos experienced a higher rate of trouble with the Goodyears, naturally some felt more aggrieved than others. The Comtoyou Audis of Mehdi Bennani and Gilles Magnus had locked out the front row in qualifying, these the only drivers able to complete three laps — a full Nordschleife WTCR race distance — and now lost their best chance all season of a strong result because of something they had little or no control over. You'd forgive the Belgian team if it felt more than a little disenchanted.

So, what were the problems and how did they occur? Goodyear seemed a little nonplussed. "The teams were reporting segments of the tread separating from the tyre carcass," a Goodyear spokesperson told Autosport. "To be clear, there were no tyre blow-outs and no deflations. The integrity of the tyre remained. It was the tread layer that was damaged."

Further analysis is required before Goodyear can offer a definitive report, on a construction of tyre it uses on every WTCR track and that was run successfully on the Nordschleife in the previous two seasons. One problem, on the Honda Civic TCRs run by Munnich Motorsport and Engstler, was bodywork deflection evident at high speed on Dottinger Hohe, so much so that the right-front wheelarch on points leader Nestor Girolami's car shattered under load on his first lap in qualifying. Others reported severe vibrations, including Rob Huff in his Zengo Motorsport Cupra, and even on the GP circuit before the drivers had made it onto The Green Hell itself — ruling out any suggestion that the races could have been limited to the short circuit alone. Huff's spin and crash at the end of qualifying was likely caused by the vibrations that he and team-mate Daniel Nagy could feel at the rear, whereas Yvan Muller's Lynk & Co troubles appeared to be on the fronts. In the face of so much doubt, no wonder Goodyear raised its hand.

Was it down to kerb strikes? Were teams sticking to Goodyear's recommendations on tyre pressures and cambers? "We want to make it clear we are not putting the focus on the teams and whether they stayed within our recommendations, because we believe they do," said the company spokesperson, while de Braekeleer said of his teams: "They took a very conservative approach, even more than the recommendation they'd received."

Have we seen the last of the WTCR at the Norsdschleife? Let's hope not. De Braekeleer believes it is "a one-off problem. It doesn't mean we cannot go back. But for this year it was not possible."

The WTCR took a big hit to the chin at the Nurburgring. At a time when the series is a little wobbly, cool heads are now required amid a solidarity of purpose to bounce back off the ropes. Lessons can and must be learned, but the series still has enough of the right stuff to recover and avoid a drama turning into a crisis.

A career move for the better

Not everyone was convinced Dan Ticktum would make a smooth transition to Formula E with NIO 333, but the man himself is enjoying the change

DAN TICKTUM

This season I made the move into Formula E and, I have to say, I've enjoyed it a lot more than I thought I would. There's no shying away, I'm a petrolhead. But I've really been surprised with Formula E.

Lots of people obviously ask why Formula 1 hasn't happened. It's a combination of myself, bad timing, bad luck. At the end of the day, there were two teams that wanted to put me in F1, but I didn't have the superlicence. So, I was just sort of lingering on the side, then I open my mouth and say things and then they just think 'we can't use him for anything'.

The positives I can take from that is I was trusted by two F1 teams and, if I had the superlicence points, I'm very confident that with either one of them, I probably would have got a seat for at least a year. Who knows if it would have lasted, but I do think I would have got there. Maybe I still can. Who knows?

'What's the best thing for your career?' is the next question. I think Formula E is an incredible place to go. It was IndyCar or Formula E and I thought Formula E was the right thing for this season. I approached a couple of teams and I think that got around and then a couple of teams approached me as well, because I don't think a lot of teams thought I was interested. We had negotiations with a couple of teams, and we managed to land a drive.

Formula E became an option quite late on, mid-October, maybe even early November. I was thinking, 'What am I going to do? Am I going to go down the LMP2 route? Should I go across to IndyCar? Will I stay in Europe, try Formula 2 again and maybe find a sponsor?' I'd sort of done my time in F2: if I was going to do F2 again, I'd probably have to go to Prema, and that wasn't an option.

I want to stay relevant in Europe just in case anything does come up in F1, such as test drives. At least I'm here and ready to go.

In simple terms, I believe in the people I'm working with at NIO 333 and the only way is up. They have struggled the last couple of years. The other teams I was looking at were in a similar position, so it's just who's giving you the best contractual things really. I'm very glad with where I've ended up, to be honest. I feel happy.

There's still a lot of learning going on at the team. We've got a couple of new people and they're bringing some stuff to the table. It's about implementing their ideas versus some others and it's a work in progress. What is positive is our one-lap pace can be quite good. So, we just need to make sure we can dial the car in as best as we can, for different tracks.

If everything goes well, we do have enough pace to get into the qualifying duels, and then you never know what happens if you start in the top 10. You're in the mix of the slipstream with all the pack, so you use less energy.

The season has lived up to my expectations. There is definitely progress. I think our one-lap pace has actually been better than I was expecting, to be honest. That said, our last race weekend, in Berlin, was pretty disastrous. Unfortunately, there's no way around it. It was one of the first times I felt like I actually struggled to get to grips with the circuit, which is quite rare — I normally get used to things pretty quickly.

GALLOWAY/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Ticktum admits Berlin was a struggle, but overall he's encouraged by his season

"Then I open my mouth and say things and they just think 'we can't use him for anything'"

On the Sunday, we were very unlucky in qualifying, I had a problem with my brakes and I was only a couple of tenths off being sixth in my group. So that was a bit of a shame. I felt I had a bit of potential on Sunday. Because I was at the back for both races, we tried the save energy strategy, which didn't work because there weren't any safety cars. Waiting for safety cars and saving energy is our best shot at getting points. We aren't going to start at the back and come through the field and beat people on pace alone.

I'm back on the British Racing Drivers' Club SuperStars programme this year as well. Through COVID we couldn't do much, but they've got some exciting things planned this year. It's the highest programme a driver can get on within the BRDC, so to be able to represent it is an honour. There's a great bunch of drivers on it this year and I'm proud to have the sticker on my car.

If we can keep going the way we're going, if we can qualify well in one or two races and see how we end up after that, I'd be very happy. I think we've definitely got the potential in Formula E to do that — if we get things right.

RACE CENTRE

Perez's third F1 win makes him the most successful Mexican in championship history

RED BULL

FORMULA 1

PEREZ BRILLIANTLY STEALS LECLERC'S GLORY

Charles Leclerc looked set to end his Monaco jinx – then rain, Ferrari confusion and the on-form Red Bull number two changed the script

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

Leclerc coolly led Sainz in the wet early stages from his fifth pole position of 2022

Finally, he did it. After five previous failed attempts to even reach the chequered flag in races on his home streets in car racing, Charles Leclerc went the full distance from pole position in the 2022 Monaco Grand Prix. But he came home a distraught fourth, domination disappeared.

The winner was Sergio Perez , triumphing once again in a race of chaos. In doing so, he became Mexico's most successful F1 driver, fittingly while wearing a helmet livery tribute to Pedro Rodriguez (who he has now surpassed 3-2 in world championship GP wins).

Carlos Sainz scored his fourth podium of 2022 in second, but was once again left stunned by how close he'd come to a maiden triumph. Max Verstappen, on a sub-par weekend for the world champion, was somewhat shocked to extend his points lead over Leclerc given a late qualifying stoppage had thwarted him for a second year in a row.

But the headline results barely scratch the surface of a race Ferrari could and should have won with either of its cars. It lost out at six critical points and so handed glory to Perez instead...

RAIN WRECKS LECLERC'S DRY-RACE HOPES

Pole wins a dry Monaco race — that's just how it is. With Sainz starting second, Leclerc, lining up on his fifth 2022 pole, was nailed on for victory in a 'normal' Monaco GP. It was not far off 10C cooler than in qualifying, but the sun had shone throughout the morning and predictions of any rain threatening the race where receding — by some estimates by as much as 50% compared to earlier forecasts. But as the grid prepared to form up, the air was close and muggy, the sun suddenly struggling to break through clouds that had built up quickly overhead in the final hour before the start. Then there were sporadic rain drops. This became a steady shower and, as Autosport left the grid, Ferrari mechanics were pushing a stack of wet-weather tyres in the other direction. As we followed *Game of Thrones* actor Rose Leslie down the pitlane with her Red Bull hospitality minders, their mechanic colleagues were also hurriedly shifting wets to the grid.

The FIA soon announced the start procedure would be suspended — five minutes before the scheduled 1500 start time. A further announcement followed, explaining that the formation lap would take place at 1509 behind the safety car, mandating all cars be fitted with extreme wets. It is understood that the FIA, with long-time World Endurance Championship race director Eduardo Freitas in charge of his second F1 event following his Spanish GP debut, delayed the start to allow the teams ample time to change their tyres. The governing body issued a statement that the safety car start was "done for safety reasons in consideration that there has been no wet running this weekend".

A further seven-minute delay followed but, at 1516, Leclerc and the safety car led the pack off the grid. But, by now, the rain was hosing down. In two laps at reduced speed, the intensity of the rain reached such a level that standing water pooled in many places and the right of Rascasse was effectively submerged, the drainage briefly overwhelmed. The red flags flew. But the race was not suspended — the two-hour time limit had not begun to tick down, in scenes similar to the Spa farce washout. A further 45-minute delay followed.

This ended up as long as it did for two reasons. One, the track needed to dry out and a weather break found, which was. But complicating matters was a brief grid power outage (the cars were lined up in the pitlane per the red flag procedure). This had to be fixed, but when it was the FIA couldn't be certain that the start gantry lights and grid slot marker boards would work as intended, so a decision was made that

only rolling starts would follow when racing did commence.

It did so at 1605. The rolling nature helped Leclerc, given it reduced any threat from Sainz, but the damage to his hopes for a clean, calm, dry run to a first home win was total. He could still pull it off, but had to rely on tricky strategy calls going his way.

FERRARI GETS TWO TYRE CALLS WRONG AT ONCE

When the rolling action finally started following two further safety car formation laps, with the race length reduced at this stage from 78 laps to 77, Leclerc was initially in complete command. Over the 14 tours from the lap three restart, he romped clear to a lead of 6.3 seconds. He typically went nearly a second quicker in sector one, before Sainz stole tenths back in sectors two and three. Verstappen, in fourth behind Perez, fell to 10.1s in arrears over the same distance.

By this stage, team radio discussion for the top four was dominated by talk of getting off the full wets — but with a choice, to switch to intermediates or go straight to slicks. Sainz had Lewis Hamilton's 2016 win here in mind at this stage — this was secured after ignoring the inters and with Red Bull botching Daniel Ricciardo's wet-dry tyre tactics — and was adamant that slicks was his preferred choice, questioning an instruction to pit for inters on lap 17.

This was the lap after Perez had come in for the intermediate rubber from 8.1s behind Leclerc, and now Ferrari was entering a critical phase of decision-making.

"I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT MADE US CHANGE OUR MINDS AND GO ON THE INTERMEDIATES"

In the pack behind, Pierre Gasly, Lance Stroll and Nicholas Latifi had gone to the inters ahead of the first rolling start. Although Gasly's progress up the order was stymied by battles, he was still reasonably quick. But he wasn't going fast enough to make an inters call a no-brainer. Yet Perez was flying on his, displaying enough pace on his out-lap that at the end of it he trailed Leclerc by 24.1s when it had been 26.2s at Massenet.

"The first mistake," Ferrari team boss Mattia Binotto said later, "was underestimating the pace of the intermediate. And the gap we had to the other cars in terms of track position."

Two laps after Perez had made his undercut stop, Ferrari called Leclerc in. Before the Red Bull driver had pitted, Leclerc had told engineer Xavier Marcos Padros that the conditions meant the choice "could be a slick but not now". On what became his first in-lap he stated: "Inter will be much quicker, for sure." "I don't understand what made us change our minds and go on the intermediates," he said after the race, with the full knowledge of how that call then backfired.

As Leclerc exited the pits with his inters, Marcos warned him it "will be tight with Perez", but just a few seconds later had to declare: "Gap to Perez 4.4s." A stunning turnaround, but all was not lost.

The next time by, lap 20, Leclerc was eating into Perez's advantage fast. But after coming up behind Alex Albon's now slick-shod Williams at Massenet, Leclerc had to follow his friend all the way to Ste Devote (where Albon slid down the escape road) on the next tour. His radio frustrations went from an airily disappointed "Ahh, Alex" to "Oh come on for f***'s sake", then "Oh! F****** hell!" once he was finally by. But remarkably, he was still closer to Perez — 3.472s behind at the start of lap 21. That was down to 1.351s the next time by the Swimming Pool, but here Ferrari got caught out again and the result brought a further »

Perez locks up on his medium tyres, which would give him cause for concern late in the grand prix

HONE

barrage of swearing from the former dominant race leader.

Sainz had got his wish and was going straight to slicks from the full wets, but on the lap he came in — that 21st tour — the gap to Perez behind had been under four seconds, the Red Bull having almost completely erased its extra pitstop. The hard Pirellis were fitted to the new lead Ferrari — this was the only rubber certain to go the distance after the softs and mediums had grained on most cars in FP2.

Ferrari produced a 2.5s service for Sainz, but also had to turn around Leclerc in a muddled double-stack stop. Marcos had called his charge in, only to try to reverse that decision 8s later, by which time Leclerc was in the pits and realising he'd have to slow to allow Sainz to clear the pitbox. Compared to his team-mate, Leclerc lost 3.368s in total pitlane time here, 0.5s of which was spent longer in the pitbox, fulminating with fury at his sudden change in fortune.

Plenty went wrong for Leclerc over which he had no control last Sunday, but he might have been better off vocally insisting on going straight from full wets to slicks given his prowess to that point…

"We should have called him earlier," Binotto said of Leclerc's strategy options through this phase of the race. "At least a lap early [for inters]. Or if not, as we did [with Sainz], we should have stayed out and simply stayed on the extreme wet protecting the position and then maybe switching directly onto the dries."

LATIFI HOLDS UP SAINZ'S OUT-LAP

What was clear once the two Ferraris had returned to the action on the hards was that it was all about in-lap pace versus out-lap speed — this time an overcut situation. Perez versus Sainz; Verstappen, who had gone to the inters on the same lap as Leclerc, versus the home hero.

"We were able to have a very quick in-lap," said Perez, who also stated he had "definitely" considered going from full wets straight to slicks. "We pushed really hard. The tyre was there and the track was dry for the slick tyres." Perez produced a 1m43.440s as he raced for the pits again, compared to Sainz's 1m47.551s not long before. But what also made a massive difference was the Spaniard having to follow Latifi's Williams from the run up the hill to Massenet all the way to the tunnel, the Canadian passing seven blazing blue-flag marker boards (Albon had earlier passed 17 while in front of Leclerc). "I was wheelspinning, obviously on a wet patch," Sainz said of Latifi getting past at the pit exit on his slicks out-lap. "And he just managed to sneak in ahead of me."

"WE PUSHED REALLY HARD. THE TYRE WAS THERE AND THE TRACK WAS DRY FOR THE SLICK TYRES"

The damage was done. Perez pitted for hards and came out still ahead. Sainz's cause wasn't helped when he clouted the outside Casino Square barrier, and the next time down the pitstraight he caught two massive slides. "The race should have ended there," said Sainz of his impressive catch. "I went on the damp patch and suddenly the car gave me a massive oversteer moment."

Leclerc had insisted on "no talking" when Marcos broached the subject of the race not even being at half distance now he was on slicks. When he'd completed his out-lap, he'd found Verstappen emerging from the pits just ahead. Leclerc jostled in his title rival's wake up Beau Rivage, but there was no way ahead.

RED BULLS SURVIVE PIT EXIT SAGA

Now for a little more timeline alteration. In the aftermath of the race, Ferrari filed a protest over how both Red Bulls had exited the pits. The problem, it suggested, was that both had appeared to touch the yellow pit exit line and each possibly crossed it. The penalty for this, based on Yuki Tsunoda crossing the Austrian GP pit entry line in 2021, would be a five-second addition to their race times. Given Perez's eventual winning margin over Leclerc's fourth place was 2.922s, the legal wrangling really mattered.

Leclerc made two tyre stops close together as confusion reigned…

TEE

…and allowed Verstappen to get ahead to beat his main title rival

DUNBAR

The argument over Verstappen's indiscretion, which did appear the more egregious, was heard first. Ferrari argued, according to an official FIA bulletin, "that on the exit from the pits on lap 23, Car 1 [Verstappen] put part of its left front and rear tyres on the tarmac on the LEFT side of the yellow line", and that "this was in breach of the Race Director's Event Notes". Plus, put forward the red team, "that the Notes indicate to the teams how they are to act and the teams abide by them even if they are in contradiction to the International Sporting Code".

The ISC article in question — Article 5 c) of Chapter IV of Appendix L — was updated for 2022 and states "that at the pit exit a car 'must not cross' the line". As all parties agreed that this hadn't happened, and with a precedent from Lance Stroll's similar incident at the 2021 Monaco race, Verstappen was cleared.

Ferrari's argument based on the race director Event Notes — Freitas's instruction that "drivers must keep to the right" all the way until the pit exit ends — was dismissed since the ISC "takes precedent over any interpretation of the Notes" because the code had not been breached. The Notes just hadn't been updated from 2021 to reflect that.

Ferrari then accepted that Perez's car "did not have any part of its front or rear tyres on the left of the yellow line" and so conceded its case. Perez's win, when it came, would stand.

RED BULL'S RISKY RESTART TYRE CALL PAYS OFF

After triggering the pit exit saga that would take place after the race, Perez spent the next three laps clear in the lead, building up an advantage of 1.5s. But as he ended his 26th lap, this was imperilled when Mick Schumacher crashed heavily at the chicane.

The Haas driver was fighting Zhou Guanyu over 16th when he lost the rear of his car between the Swimming Pool chicanes and spun through 360 degrees. Hitting the Tecpro barrier sideways meant that when that structure absorbed the hit and shifted with the car, its weight ripped the German's car in two — transmission and rear wing together, debris strewn everywhere. He was unhurt, with a lot of energy thankfully dissipated. »

QUALIFYING

SUTTON

"It was a great lap until then." For the second year in a row, a Charles Leclerc Monaco Grand Prix pole was sealed by a red flag. This time around, it was someone else buried in the barrier, and Leclerc was left only to rue what he perhaps considers one of the best 'lost' laps in Formula 1 history.

Q3 had developed rather differently. Monaco means such things aren't unusual. Leclerc headed the queue at the end of the pitlane for the final segment and knew he'd "waited for Q3 to start and push", which suggests he'd rather effortlessly topped Q1 (briefly halted inadvertently by a marshal after Yuki Tsunoda's chicane wallstrike) and Q2.

In comparison to what was to come, his 1m11.376s first lap was a calm affair, putting him top by 0.225s over Ferrari team-mate Carlos Sainz, 0.253s clear of FP3 pacesetter Sergio Perez and 0.290s up on title rival Max Verstappen in fourth. Leclerc started a second flier on his first set of new softs, but abandoned it after getting massively sideways midway through Massenet. Perez, also fuelled for a two-attempts second run, gave up too after shipping time around the lap.

Unlike the two Mercedes – George Russell and Lewis Hamilton slotted in among Lando Norris and Fernando Alonso in sixth and eighth – the Ferraris and Red Bulls weren't doing an extra preparation tour to aid tyre warm-up. This meant dodging out-of-sync cars for all involved.

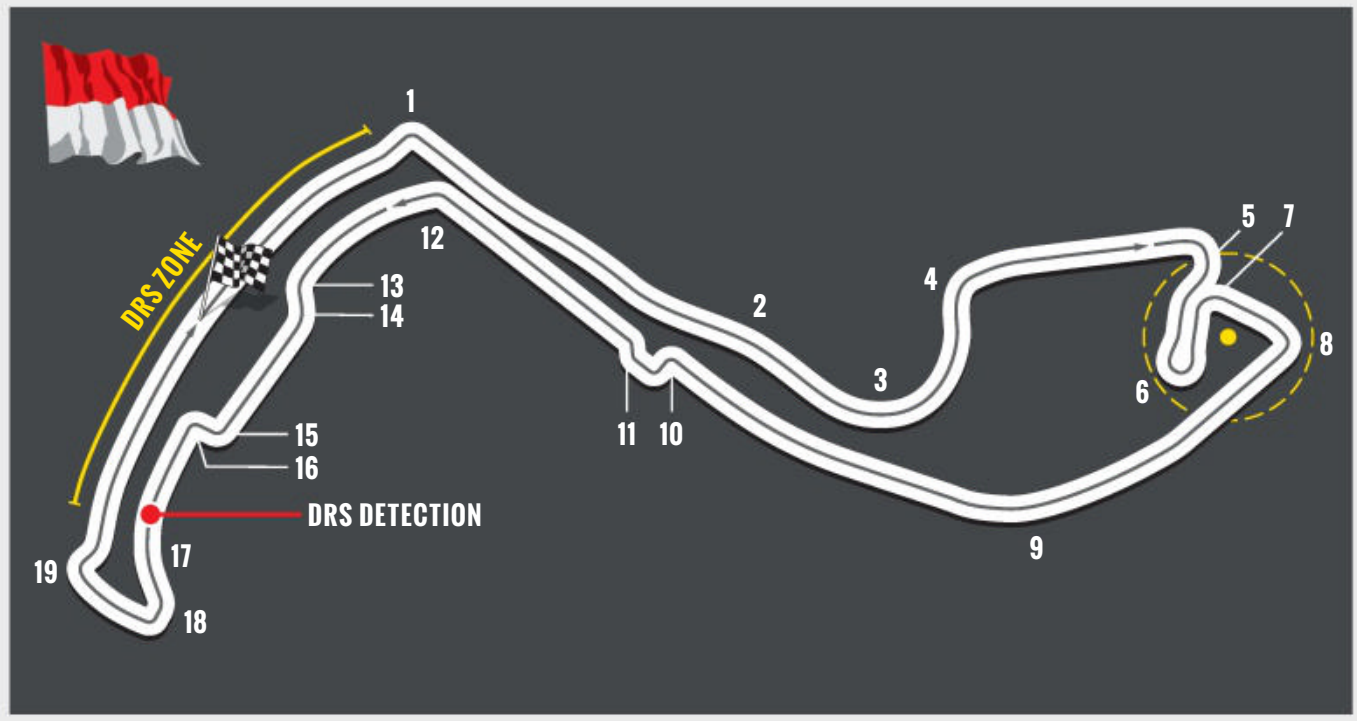
Verstappen was the first focus for the final runs because he was trying a push-slow-push programme – anything to try to fix the balance and understeer issues costing him time through the tight corners. After not bettering his 1m11.666s banker, it was all down to the last laps.

"UNLEASHED, LECLERC GAVE IT EVERYTHING. HE HAD TO CATCH 'SNAPS EVERYWHERE'"

Unleashed, Leclerc gave it everything. He had to catch "snaps everywhere", including a wild slide close to the Ste Devote barrier, but was gaining massively on his previous best. "I was surprised by how much pace there was, because the balance was really tricky on that lap," said Leclerc, who was 0.4s up as he exited Tabac.

Then it came to a sudden halt. Perez slid backwards into the Portier barrier, trying to hang on with "tyres that were too cold". Sainz approached the right-hander and saw the yellow flags too late just as he turned in, spinning sideways and hitting the stricken Red Bull's right front. They blocked the track and, as the red flags flew, Verstappen arrived. He'd been only 0.1s down on Leclerc's best sector at one point, his car balance suddenly "just much better". He raged at the scene in front: "This is typical Monaco, isn't it? For f***'s sake."

TRACKSIDE VIEW



The 2022 Formula 1 cars and the Monaco Grand Prix. Quite the contradiction. Aggressively styled and constructed principally to raise the racing spectacle, the new ground-effect cars are being unleashed on a Principality track where passing for modern grand prix machinery is even more impossible than in bygone eras.

At their best in super-high-speed swoops, these cars are just not supposed to be here. Not Monaco, with its low average speed and turns so tight that special shorter steering arms must be fitted. Yet it remains an ultimate F1 setting.

Autosport is standing on the outside of the Loews hairpin, the swanky Fairmont hotel behind. In front of us is the Mirabeau-Loews-Portier plunge and it's the start of first practice. The sun is beating down, roasting the tiny city state. Here comes Max Verstappen, followed by the rest. Valtteri Bottas will appear just twice in the whole 60-minute session, the Finn undone by an MGU-K failure that occurs aboard his Alfa Romeo after he's swung very wide of the hairpin apex on his second tour and booted his machine in first gear to stay out of the barriers, his throttle sticking open, singing wildly, meaning he doesn't return.

The drivers quickly build up to speed. Above us, something really unusual is happening – the bumps through Mirabeau are so severe on the low-slung, stiff cars that George Russell's Mercedes is "almost doing a wheelie" with both front wheels popping off the ground.

"AT THEIR BEST IN HIGH-SPEED SWOOPS, THESE CARS ARE NOT MEANT TO BE HERE"

Things aren't quite as dramatic where we are. As was the case with the cars that came before, at the hairpin some lift the inside fronts off the ground as the sharply descending track falls away – it's just more pronounced in 2022 with the less sophisticated suspensions.

The two Mercedes are doing so every lap, but it's the AlphaTauris that are keeping their left fronts raised for longest. This is revealed with a walk around the hairpin to study the car behaviour at the exit. The drivers want to swing the front around as nimbly as possible, most opting to keep only their left-rears on the 'kerb' (painted concrete that slopes down, only slightly raised above the asphalt) and slingshot around. Yuki Tsunoda is particularly tighter – this means he's on three wheels further than anyone bar team-mate Pierre Gasly. His car rotates faster, albeit on a pinched line.

From there they all blast the throttle, Charles Leclerc getting closer to the exit barrier than anyone else. It's a violent burst of energy, but it's restricted by the fast approach to the right that feeds into Portier. These cars are caged, the drivers fighting to release the most speed they can without damaging anything – capable of more but restricted by the buildings packed to the rafters with booze-quaffing, bathrobe-clad onlookers. It's excess everywhere. And F1 wouldn't be F1 without it.

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

AlphaTauris really stood out at Formula 1's famous slow corner

KALINAUCKAS

Perez crosses the line to win by 1.2 seconds from unlucky Sainz

RED BULL

The race was initially placed under the virtual safety car, which became a full safety car on lap 28, and then on lap 30 the race was stopped again. An FIA statement explaining this sequence stated: "The procedure to first put out the VSC, then SC and red flag was firstly to neutralise the race so it was safe, and then to allow the safety car to be deployed in the correct location to avoid needing to allow cars to pass, which would have slowed the recovery procedure. The red flag was shown when it became clear that the repair to the Tecpro barrier would take a significant amount of time."

After another 20-minute wait, the cars took a second rolling start. Even without the grid power problems, this would have been the case, because away from the racing line the track was still damp. That's not considered sporting for a standing start, which Verstappen anyway said "wouldn't have been fair".

The Red Bulls switched to their only set of new medium tyres, while the Ferraris stayed on the hards they'd been running previously (also the only set they had available, other than new mediums – the softs were just not an option given the high wear rate in practice after just a handful of laps). "The call was quite risky," said Verstappen. "[For restarts, mediums] have a little bit better grip and because we already did a few laps on the hard tyres, they were a bit cold."

At Ferrari, "we believed that the medium would have had graining," reflected Binotto. "The hard tyres were a lot more resilient and would have given us some opportunity at the end of the stint."

It may have been academic given the ease of negotiating a rolling start on the tight Monaco track, but running the mediums meant Perez's risk of succumbing to a Sainz attack at Ste Devote on the lap 33 restart was negated.

"SAINZ TWICE NEARLY HIT THE LEADER, AS PEREZ PARKED STRATEGICALLY ON THE INSIDE LINE"

Sainz looks less pleased than Perez, Christian Horner and Verstappen after lost win

MAUGER

MONACO'S DRY NATURE SAVES PEREZ

Ferrari's prediction did come true, but only after Perez had completed 16 laps as the leaders worked their way from the 1m23s to the low 1m16s, reaching a maximum advantage over Sainz of 3.655s. By now it was clear that the race would time out at two hours, but the early stalemate of traded fastest laps between the four leaders suddenly got interesting.

Verstappen could see that "Checo had quite a lot of front graining and Carlos was struggling a bit with the rear", the times at the front falling back to the 1m19s. With thick bands of grained rubber across both fronts, Perez was struggling with major understeer at Massenet and Casino Square. But critically his traction out of Portier meant he was rarely in any real danger of an assault at the tunnel-exit chicane.

Instead, Sainz twice nearly hit the leader at the Loews hairpin, where Perez parked strategically on the inside line. "I said, 'I'm gonna make him spin' because you were so slow," Sainz pointed out to Perez in the post-race press conference.

The disappearance of Perez's pace meant that Leclerc eroded the 2.5s gap that had crept up to Verstappen, the former leader's chase appearing somewhat half-hearted and in any case not helped by moments such as a big slide at Mirabeau on lap 40. "But then towards the end," concluded Perez, "I managed to clear up the graining a bit. That brought some lap time with it and we managed to bring it home a bit safer."

In the end, Perez got what Leclerc had wanted, Monaco's impossible passing nature protecting his lead to the finish. There, joy was the emotion for the victor, frustration for Sainz, Verstappen found delight and Leclerc's home pain endured.

NEXT F1 REPORT

AZERBAIJAN GP
16 JUNE ISSUE

RUSSELL BEATS NORRIS TO BE TOP MONACO BRIT

George Russell and Lando Norris continued to do the heavy lifting for Mercedes and McLaren respectively during the teams' difficult start to 2022, but it was ultimately the Silver Arrows driver who overthrew his compatriot to snare fifth place.

Norris, still shaking off his nasty bout of tonsillitis, claimed the qualifying bragging rights to pip Russell by one spot and a quarter of a second. He also had the measure of his old F2 title rival until his second pitstop. But as Russell did away with intermediate tyres to jump straight from full wets to the hard slick compound, he climbed past Norris for what would be fifth. By pitting one tour earlier, his Pirellis were up to temperature when they met on the climb to Massenet.

Russell (below) explained the pass missed by the TV feed: "[Norris] came out of the pits directly in front of me and sort of chopped across. I managed to overtake on the wet stuff. So that was pretty nice."

Norris accepted Mercedes' strategy had paid off and conceded that general race pace and the inability of the MCL36 to preserve its tyres is hobbling McLaren. But he still maintained that the team had otherwise "made the most of it" as Norris snared a point for fastest lap on lap 55 of 64, following a late switch to medium rubber.

Frustrated Hamilton thwarted by rigid defiance of Alpine duo

Fernando Alonso says it was "extremely easy" to keep Lewis Hamilton at bay and that it is "not my problem" if the seven-time champion was in any way frustrated that his race flatlined when he became stuck behind the Alpine driver.

Hamilton effectively had to stare at Alonso's gearbox for the duration of the 64 laps, after starting eighth to his former team-mate's seventh. But their chase came to a head after Alonso took on a set of medium tyres following the Mick Schumacher-induced red flag. As Hamilton filled Alonso's mirrors, the Spaniard fell up to 52s behind Lando Norris, who was ahead in sixth. Hamilton reckoned it was "kind of frustrating... just cruising behind him."

Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff said that his driver's inability to pass, despite lapping up to five seconds quicker, highlighted the need for layout tweaks at Monaco. "You can see that another lesson is that track position is everything in Monaco," he said. "Five seconds is like a Formula 2 car. I think we need to look."

Hamilton had plenty of time to observe the A522 machine, since he had also twice tangled with Esteban Ocon earlier on. The Frenchman was rewarded with a 5s penalty to drop from ninth at the line to be classified 12th. Hamilton was adjudged to be sufficiently alongside when turning into Ste Devote (above) when Ocon's right-rear snagged his front wing. The battle had peaked following Hamilton's stop for intermediates to rapidly gain on Ocon, who was stretching the life of his full wets.

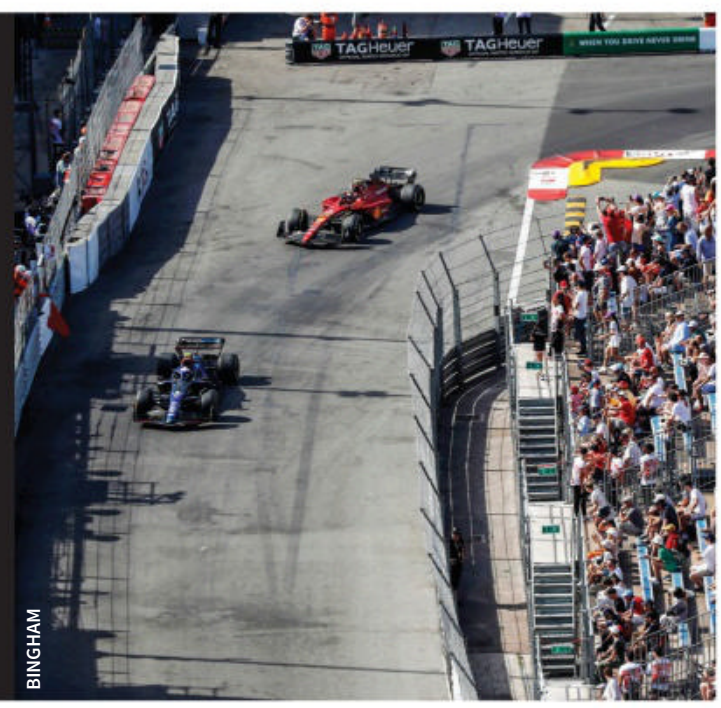
Ocon hit out at the reprimand, saying: "I'm very frustrated. Looking at the images and going to see the stewards as well, they said that if it was last year, it would have been a racing incident. This year, it is not a racing incident. Apparently we all agree that, in the Grand Prix Drivers' Association, as soon as there is a front wing next to a tyre there should be space.

"But I don't remember when this has been agreed."

BIG NUMBER

24

The number of blue-flag boards the Williams drivers passed while holding up the Ferraris at critical points. Alex Albon contributed 17 when exiting the pits on hard tyres after Charles Leclerc had taken intermediates, while Nicholas Latifi passed seven on Carlos Sainz's slick-shod out-lap.



Schumacher walks away from another car-snapping shunt

Mick Schumacher reckoned it was "super-weird" that his Haas VF-22 racer spat him into the barriers through the Swimming Pool complex to cause a red flag.

The German was running in 17th place when the car broke loose on lap 25 and hurled him into the Tecpros, with the rear end and gearbox ripping off. The lengthy repairs required a virtual then full safety car before the race was halted.

Schumacher, who also snapped his car in half as part of a $1million wreck in qualifying in Saudi Arabia earlier this season, reported: "It seemed like we were like 10 centimetres further out. That triggered maybe a wet patch with the front wheel, which then translated into a rear-wheel slide.

"That's where basically the rear came around. I tried to correct it and that's why it went to the left. It's very unfortunate and very annoying."

TEE

Q&A

DANIEL RICCIARDO
McLAREN DRIVER

What did you make of your performance in the race?
A lot happened without a lot happening. That's probably the best way to put it. The weather, grid stress and chaos from everyone figuring out what tyre to put on. I was smiling with those conditions because if you're on pole, you're not smiling, but if you're 13th or 14th, you see it as an opportunity. We tried a few things: to stay out on the extreme wet as long as we could and try to go straight to the slick. But it was tricky. The bottom line is that this was not a strong weekend. We were not quick enough to make a big impact on anyone around us.

How hard was it keeping cars behind at the end of your stint on full wets?
We were at that point where we just had to try and stick it through and just go straight to the slicks. I held [Pierre] Gasly off maybe a couple of laps, and then going into the Swimming Pool, I couldn't see him anymore in my mirror. I thought 'OK, he's alongside me.' If he didn't get me there, he was probably going to get me a few corners later. I tried to pick my battles, and I felt like if we'd put the slick on at the right time, you could probably gain like five, six, seven seconds on one lap. That's where my head was at.

Who made the ultimate calls on strategy – you or the team?
It's both. I made my intentions clear before the race. There was certainly some drive from me to execute wets straight to dries, simply because Lewis [Hamilton] did it to me in 2016. I always had that in my mind. Behind the wheel in these changing conditions, we make probably the last decision. But of course, I was speaking to the team trying to get info from them.

DUNBAR

MORE BOTTAS POINTS AS ZHOU CHANGES PANTS

By virtue of having the lightest car with the shortest wheelbase, Alfa Romeo was expected to excel around tight and twisty Monaco. But the squad's leading light Valtteri Bottas conceded that a "calculated risk" – a one-stop strategy that entailed changing from wets to hard slicks – had gone some way to limiting his afternoon's return after he chalked up ninth position.

The Finn had qualified 12th, his second Q2 elimination of the season, before rising into the points to finish ahead of Sebastian Vettel, who made several visits to the Ste Devote escape road. Bottas's ascent, however, was stymied when he was caught in the train of cars stuck in the wake of Fernando Alonso's wide Alpine.

Behind the recently upgraded Aston Martin of surprise Q3 progressor Vettel, Pierre Gasly was another driver to be held in the logjam, while Bottas's Alfa Romeo team-mate Zhou Guanyu provided stiff competition to Carlos Sainz in the unofficial competition for 'save of the day'. In an otherwise uninspiring performance – he qualified last after an ill-timed Q1 red flag caused by Yuki Tsunoda – the rookie had to attend to a massive moment out of the tunnel. He somehow caught the rear end, missed Tsunoda's AlphaTauri, and straight-lined the chicane to eventually finish 16th.

"I need new pants after that!" was the Chinese driver's understandable reaction over team radio.

AUTOSPORT

The race is on! Don't miss any of the action this season

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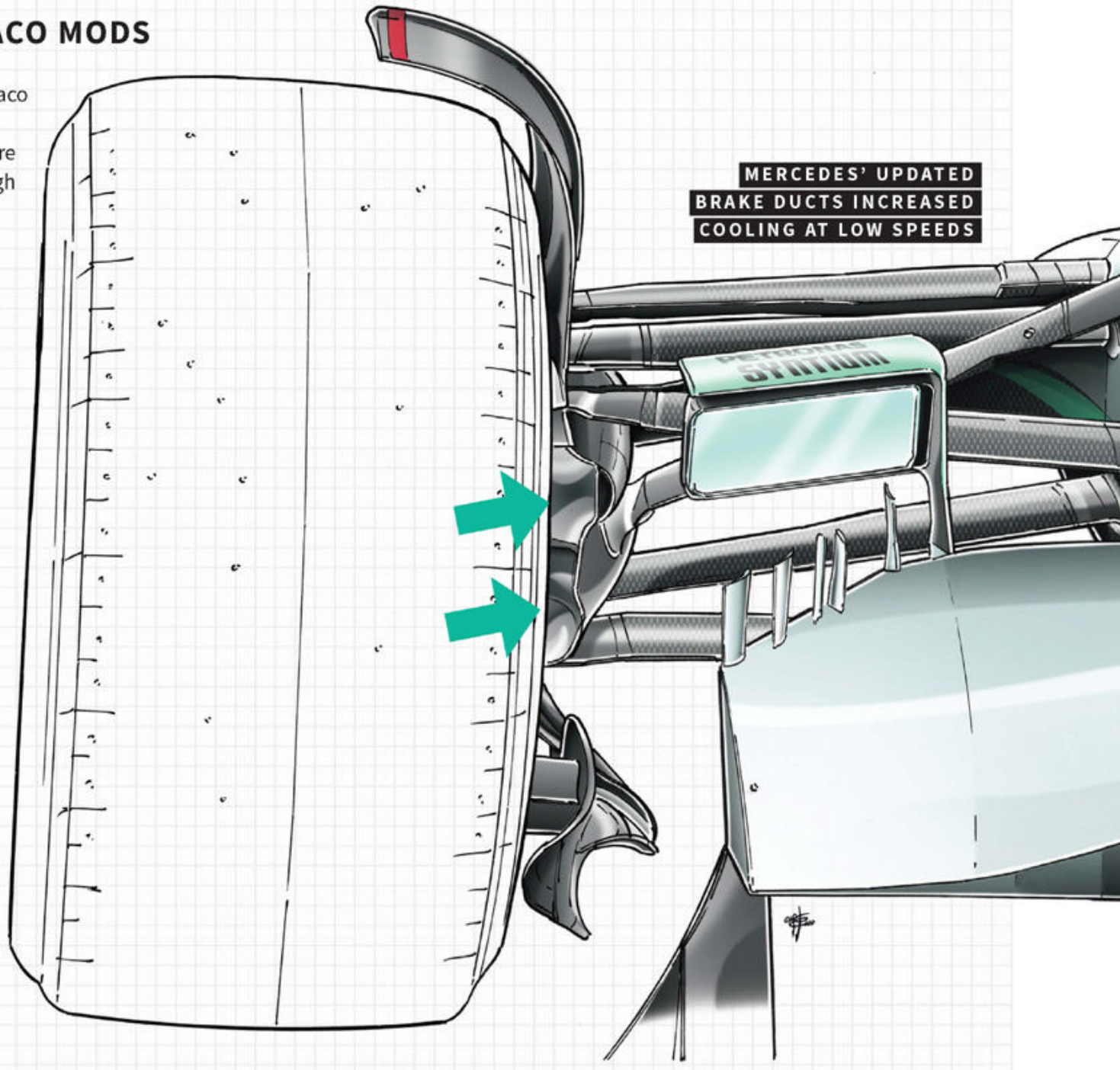
DRAWING BOARD

GIORGIO PIOLA

MERCEDES MAKES MONACO MODS



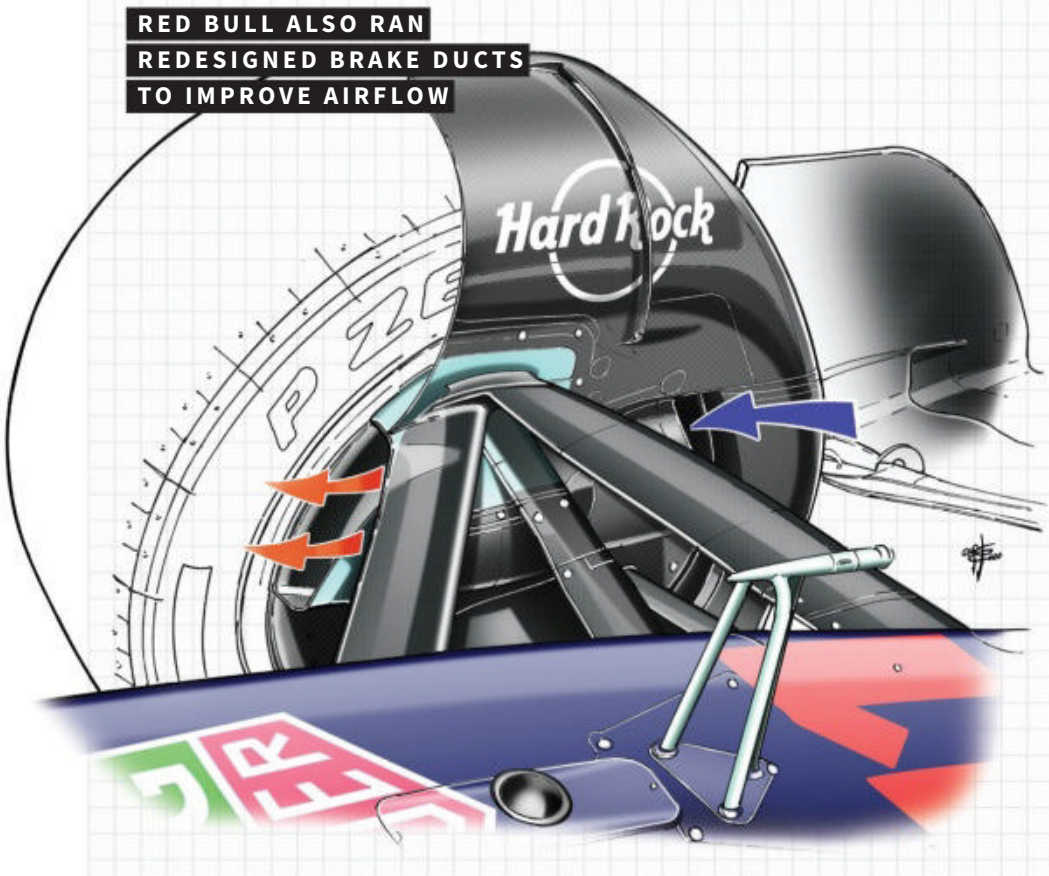
In response to the configuration of the Monaco circuit, and its plethora of braking zones, Mercedes updated its brake cooling to ensure there was no excessive heat build-up through the race owing to the low speeds. At those lower speeds, the mass flow rate of air passing through the cooling ducts is reduced, so a bigger outlet is required to shake off some of the heat.

Mercedes duly incorporated that into the 'cake tin' geometry. Its pre-race technical notes said it was indeed a circuit-specific change to improve the cooling flow for the brake discs and calipers.

The team also made another small change to the front-wing endplates, with the "plate radius altered" to "generate a small improvement in local load".

Although the team appeared to have shaken off the porpoising millstone from around the W13's neck, Lewis Hamilton felt that the bouncing he suffered around the circuit was still uncomfortable. This was down to the stiffer suspension of the 2022 generation of car, along with the reduced size of tyre sidewall, and thus the car was responding to the bumps without too much give. The team noted ahead of the weekend that it expected to struggle on the low-speed Monaco circuit, with the upcoming higher-speed environment of Baku perhaps expected to be more to its liking.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



RED BULL BOOSTS BRAKE COOLING

Red Bull also made changes to its front brake cooling in a similar response to Mercedes, stating ahead of the event that the "changes offer more front brake system cooling flow to counter the low average airspeed of Monaco and the likelihood of running in traffic".

As is also usual in Monaco, changes were made to the steering geometry to ensure that the drivers had the required lock to navigate the Fairmont hairpin (Loews) and Rascasse, which are two of the tightest corners on the F1 calendar. That usually includes introducing a shorter steering arm to ensure that full lock can be applied at the hairpin, although in the past teams have also introduced revised suspension members with small cutouts to ensure there's no contact between the tyre and the wishbones.

With the reduced speeds, teams also had to consider the blanking panels used on the bodywork louvres to increase the cooling, but Red Bull elected to run the usual half-panel blanking rather than fully opening it out. The team also ran its maximum-downforce rear wing to improve overall traction, which is a feature of Monaco where top speed is rarely a consideration around the tight Monte Carlo streets.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

FREE PRACTICE 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Leclerc	1m14.531s
2	Perez	1m14.570s
3	Sainz	1m14.601s
4	Verstappen	1m14.712s
5	Norris	1m15.056s
6	Gasly	1m15.083s
7	Ricciardo	1m15.157s
8	Russell	1m15.211s
9	Vettel	1m15.387s
10	Hamilton	1m15.499s
11	Tsunoda	1m15.536s
12	Stroll	1m15.539s
13	Alonso	1m15.749s
14	Magnussen	1m15.806s
15	Albon	1m16.110s
16	Ocon	1m16.315s
17	Zhou	1m16.417s
18	Latifi	1m17.714s
19	Schumacher	1m18.636s
20	Bottas	no time

WEATHER Sunny, air 31-33C track 52-55C

FREE PRACTICE 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Leclerc	1m12.656s
2	Sainz	1m12.700s
3	Perez	1m13.035s
4	Verstappen	1m13.103s
5	Norris	1m13.294s
6	Russell	1m13.406s
7	Gasly	1m13.636s
8	Alonso	1m13.912s
9	Vettel	1m14.059s
10	Tsunoda	1m14.134s
11	Magnussen	1m14.239s
12	Hamilton	1m14.267s
13	Bottas	1m14.468s
14	Albon	1m14.486s
15	Zhou	1m14.525s
16	Stroll	1m14.623s
17	Schumacher	1m14.894s
18	Ocon	1m15.216s
19	Latifi	1m16.276s
20	Ricciardo	no time

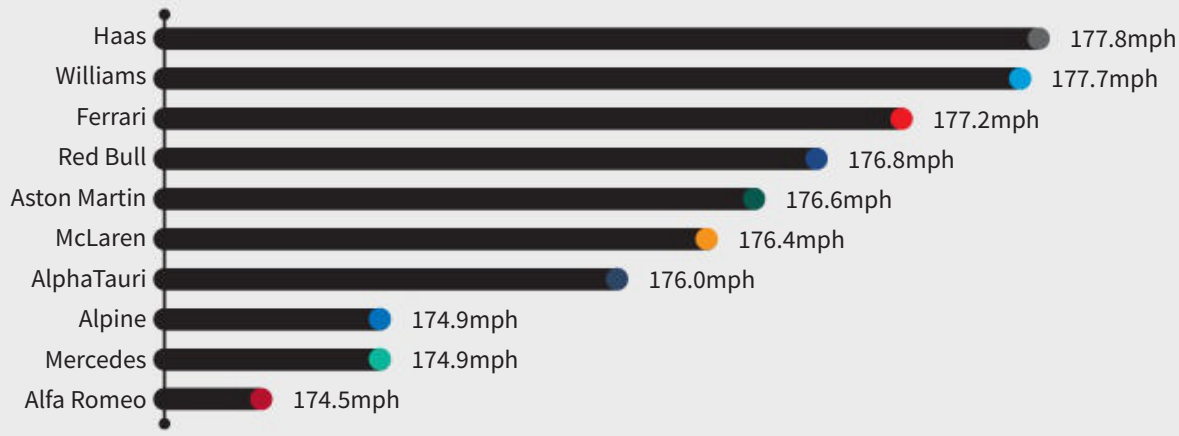
WEATHER Sunny, air 30-33C track 46-52C

FREE PRACTICE 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Perez	1m12.476s
2	Leclerc	1m12.517s
3	Sainz	1m12.846s
4	Verstappen	1m12.881s
5	Gasly	1m13.210s
6	Norris	1m13.226s
7	Hamilton	1m13.375s
8	Magnussen	1m13.436s
9	Russell	1m13.476s
10	Alonso	1m13.585s
11	Tsunoda	1m13.645s
12	Schumacher	1m13.827s
13	Vettel	1m13.838s
14	Bottas	1m13.849s
15	Albon	1m13.882s
16	Ricciardo	1m14.104s
17	Ocon	1m14.260s
18	Stroll	1m14.639s
19	Zhou	1m14.861s
20	Latifi	1m14.910s

WEATHER Sunny, air 27C track 51-53C

SPEED TRAP (QUALIFYING)



QUALIFYING 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Leclerc	1m12.569s
2	Sainz	1m12.616s
3	Russell	1m12.787s
4	Ocon	1m12.848s
5	Norris	1m12.927s
6	Verstappen	1m12.993s
7	Perez	1m13.004s
8	Magnussen	1m13.069s
9	Tsunoda	1m13.110s
10	Vettel	1m13.313s
11	Ricciardo	1m13.338s
12	Alonso	1m13.394s
13	Hamilton	1m13.444s
14	Schumacher	1m13.469s
15	Bottas	1m13.541s
16	Albon	1m13.611s
17	Gasly	1m13.660s
18	Stroll	1m13.678s
19	Latifi	1m14.403s
20	Zhou	1m15.606s

QUALIFYING 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Leclerc	1m11.864s
2	Perez	1m11.954s
3	Sainz	1m12.074s
4	Verstappen	1m12.117s
5	Norris	1m12.266s
6	Ocon	1m12.528s
7	Hamilton	1m12.595s
8	Vettel	1m12.613s
9	Russell	1m12.617s
10	Alonso	1m12.688s
11	Tsunoda	1m12.797s
12	Bottas	1m12.909s
13	Magnussen	1m12.921s
14	Ricciardo	1m12.964s
15	Schumacher	1m13.081s

QUALIFYING 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Leclerc	1m11.376s
2	Sainz	1m11.601s
3	Perez	1m11.629s
4	Verstappen	1m11.666s
5	Norris	1m11.849s
6	Russell	1m12.112s
7	Alonso	1m12.247s
8	Hamilton	1m12.560s
9	Vettel	1m12.732s
10	Ocon	1m13.047s

WEATHER Sporadic cloud, air 26-29C track 44-51C

SEASON STATS

	DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1	Verstappen	125	1	1
2	Leclerc	116	1	1
3	Perez	110	1	1
4	Russell	84	3	4
5	Sainz	83	2	2
6	Hamilton	50	3	5
7	Norris	48	3	3
8	Bottas	40	5	5
9	Ocon	30	6	5
10	Magnussen	15	5	4
11	Ricciardo	11	6	6
12	Tsunoda	11	7	9
13	Alonso	10	7	5
14	Gasly	6	8	7
15	Vettel	5	8	9
16	Albon	3	9	14
17	Stroll	2	10	10
18	Zhou	1	10	13
19	Schumacher	0	11	10
20	Hulkenberg	0	12	17
21	Latifi	0	14	18

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1	Red Bull	235
2	Ferrari	199
3	Mercedes	134
4	McLaren	59
5	Alfa Romeo	41
6	Alpine	40
7	AlphaTauri	17
8	Haas	15
9	Aston Martin	7
10	Williams	3

QUALIFYING BATTLE

Hamilton	3	4	Russell
Verstappen	5	2	Perez
Leclerc	7	0	Sainz
Ricciardo	1	6	Norris
Alonso	3	3	Ocon
Gasly	4	3	Tsunoda
Vettel	4	1	Stroll
Stroll	1	1	Hulkenberg
Latifi	1	5	Albon
Zhou	0	7	Bottas
Magnussen	5	2	Schumacher

Based on Q1/Q2/Q3 sessions, not sprint races. Events removed when one driver in a team could not record a representative time for reasons outside their control

WINS

Verstappen	4
Leclerc	2
Perez	1

FASTEST LAPS

Leclerc	3
Verstappen	2
Norris	1
Perez	1

POLE POSITIONS

Leclerc	5
Perez	1
Verstappen	1

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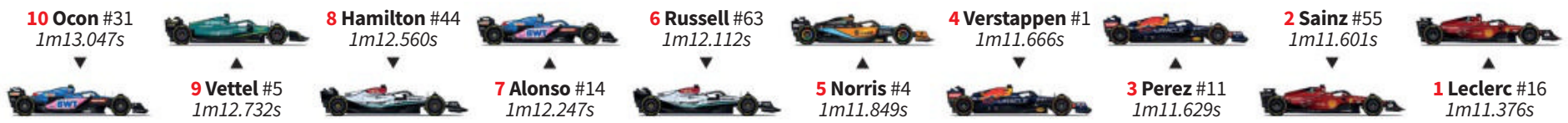


RACE RESULTS ROUND 7/22 (64 LAPS – 132.71 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISH TIME	LED	TYRES
1	**Sergio Perez** (MEX)	Red Bull	1h56m30.265s	44	**W**n, **I**n, **H**n, **M**n
2	**Carlos Sainz** (ESP)	Ferrari	+1.154s	3	**W**n, **H**n
3	**Max Verstappen** (NLD)	Red Bull	+1.491s		**W**n, **I**n, **H**n, **M**n
4	**Charles Leclerc** (MCO)	Ferrari	+2.922s	17	**W**n, **I**n, **H**n
5	**George Russell** (GBR)	Mercedes	+11.968s		**W**n, **H**n, **I**n
6	**Lando Norris** (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	+12.231s		**W**n, **I**n, **H**n, **M**n
7	**Fernando Alonso** (ESP)	Alpine-Renault	+46.358s		**W**n, **H**n, **M**n
8	**Lewis Hamilton** (GBR)	Mercedes	+50.388s		**W**n, **I**n, **H**n, **M**n
9	**Valtteri Bottas** (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	+52.525s		**W**n, **H**n
10	**Sebastian Vettel** (DEU)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+53.536s		**W**n, **I**n, **H**u
11	**Pierre Gasly** (FRA)	AlphaTauri-Red Bull	+54.289s		**W**n, **I**n, **H**n
12	**Esteban Ocon** (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+55.644s		**W**n, **H**n, **M**n
13	**Daniel Ricciardo** (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	+57.635s		**W**n, **H**n
14	**Lance Stroll** (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+1m00.802s		**W**n, **I**n, **H**u
15	**Nicholas Latifi** (CAN)	Williams-Mercedes	-1 lap/+10.020s		**W**n, **I**n, **H**n, **M**n
16	**Zhou Guanyu** (CHN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap/+10.500s		**W**n, **H**n, **M**n
17	**Yuki Tsunoda** (JPN)	AlphaTauri-Red Bull	-1 lap/+32.758s		**W**n, **I**n, **H**n, **M**n, **S**n
R	**Alexander Albon** (THA)	Williams-Mercedes	48 laps-bottoming		**W**n, **H**n, **M**n
R	**Mick Schumacher** (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	24 laps-accident		**W**n, **I**n, **H**n
R	**Kevin Magnussen** (DNK)	Haas-Ferrari	19 laps-power unit		**W**n

FASTEST LAPS

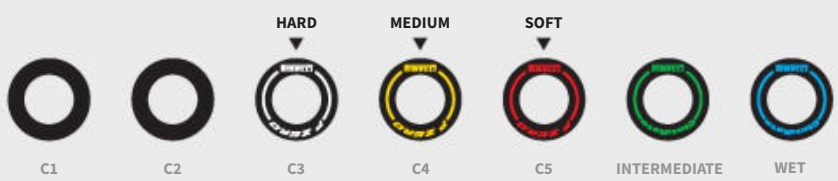
POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	**Norris**	1m14.693s	-	55
2	**Tsunoda**	1m15.334s	+0.641s	61
3	**Alonso**	1m15.882s	+1.189s	50
4	**Perez**	1m16.028s	+1.335s	46
5	**Verstappen**	1m16.052s	+1.359s	47
6	**Leclerc**	1m16.249s	+1.556s	46
7	**Sainz**	1m16.421s	+1.728s	47
8	**Russell**	1m16.830s	+2.137s	42
9	**Hamilton**	1m17.203s	+2.510s	51
10	**Gasly**	1m17.344s	+2.651s	61
11	**Ricciardo**	1m17.532s	+2.839s	59
12	**Vettel**	1m17.558s	+2.865s	54
13	**Ocon**	1m17.571s	+2.878s	50
14	**Bottas**	1m17.600s	+2.907s	57
15	**Stroll**	1m17.672s	+2.979s	56
16	**Albon**	1m18.023s	+3.330s	40
17	**Zhou**	1m18.200s	+3.507s	52
18	**Latifi**	1m18.579s	+3.886s	43
19	**Schumacher**	1m24.778s	+10.085s	24
20	**Magnussen**	1m33.754s	+19.061s	18

WEATHER Wet then drying, air 20-23C track 26-32C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 68.343mph **FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED** 99.938mph

TYRES

KEY: H - Hard M - Medium S - Soft I - Intermediate W - Wet n - New set u - Used set



RACE BRIEFING

RACE PENALTIES

ALBON 5s penalty and one licence point for leaving the track and gaining an advantage

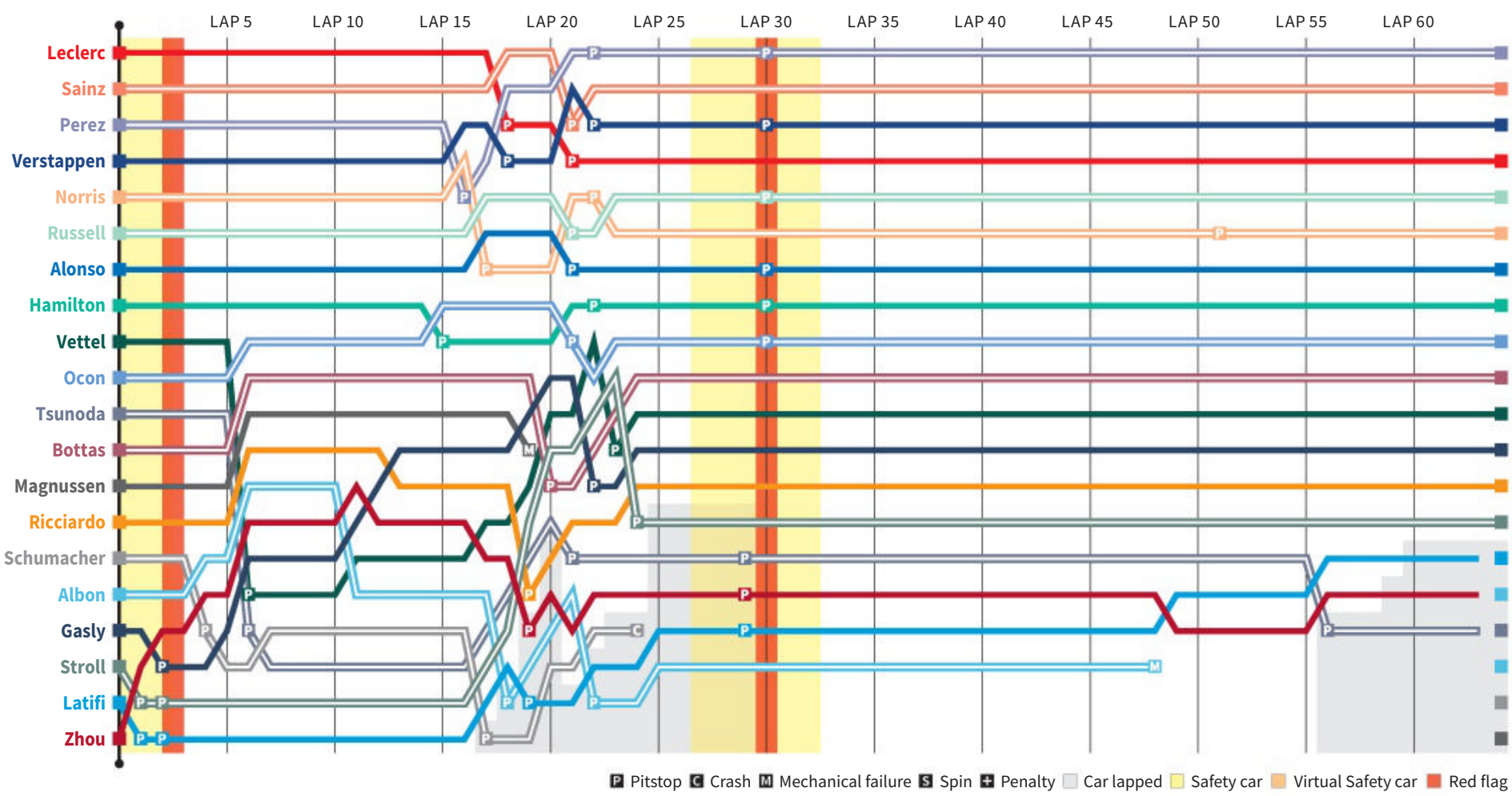
OCON 5s penalty and one licence point for causing a collision with Hamilton

STAT

2016

The previous time the Monaco GP was won from outside the front row was 2016, when Hamilton won another wet-dry race

LAP CHART What happened, when



HOW WE WORKED FIVE TO NINE

A quintet of drivers were a shade short of perfect in our ratings score, as Monaco's fickle weather threw extra challenges at the grid this year

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

MERCEDES

LEWIS HAMILTON

Started **8th** — Result **8th**

6 Two places behind Russell and a slower Alpine. Being in the wrong engine mode on his early Q3 best lap was costly when the red flags came out. In the race, pitted for inters early but got stuck behind Ocon, with whom he was innocent in two clashes. Could only "cruise" behind Alonso.

GEORGE RUSSELL

Started **6th** — Result **5th**

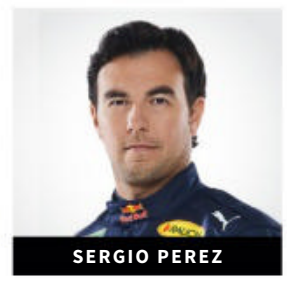
9 Clipped the wall on his best Q3 lap. Blasted past Norris when the McLaren stopped for a second time, after Russell stayed out and avoided inters. Lapped faster than the leaders before the second stoppage, then badly grained his mediums in final laps. Was also warned for chicane track-limits abuse.

RED BULL

MAX VERSTAPPEN

Started **4th** — Result **3rd**

7 Was not at ease all weekend as he couldn't dial out understeer that Perez preferred. Could have been second in Q3, but his early struggles cost him at the red flag. In the race events came his way: he flirted with disaster as he came out of the pits on slicks, but did at least handle his final stint rubber well.



SERGIO PEREZ

Started **3rd** — Result **1st**

9 Took a famous win by nailing the race, but late Q3 crash and eating his medium tyres costs him a maximum. Didn't dither on taking inters and was supreme on them to undercut Leclerc and erase Sainz's edge from one stop fewer. Inters in-lap was mighty and dealt well with late pressure.

FERRARI

CHARLES LECLERC

Started **1st** — Result **4th**

9 Q3 efforts were mighty to claim pole. Dominated first stint but lost out to Perez's inters undercut. Albon delay hurt him, but he was still rapid on the inters before the double-stack botch cost him. Did let Verstappen build a gap on softer final tyres and wasn't decisive on strategy before his first stop.

CARLOS SAINZ

Started **2nd** — Result **2nd**

9 The slower Ferrari by 0.2s in qualifying and during the race's first phase. But he showed leadership in eschewing the inters and might have won without Latifi delay after slipping on cold slicks at the pit exit. Harried Perez to the finish, after nearly massively binning it on the pitstraight.

McLAREN

DANIEL RICCIARDO

Started **14th** - Result **13th**

4 Lost momentum with his FP2 crash and didn't improve when others did in Q2. In the race, stayed out long enough to go straight to slicks, but by then was so far behind he was briefly lapped. Gasly got him easily out of Tabac, but Ricciardo thought he'd come by anyway since he lacked pace.

LANDO NORRIS

Started **5th** — Result **6th**

9 Brilliant qualifying despite being only "95%" over tonsillitis. Race-wise, lost out to Russell by taking inters, the Merc's slicks being a lap hotter so it could nip by up Beau Rivage. But Norris could have shut the door. Showed searing pace after third stop to erase a 30s gap to Russell.

ALPINE

FERNANDO ALONSO

Started **7th** — Result **7th**

8 Q3 crash, but held his race position in front of Hamilton early on, then gained from Ocon holding the Mercedes up to skip the inters phase. Created a slowly touring train to avoid his mediums graining – can't be faulted for that – then turned on the pace and dropped Hamilton.

ESTEBAN OCON

Started **10th** - Result **12th**

5 Did well to make Q3. Gained from Vettel's early race stop, but was far behind Hamilton when the Merc stopped for inters. Penalised for their Ste Devote clash and that later lost him points. But a worse move putting Hamilton against the pitstraight wall on the next lap went somehow unpunished.

ALPHATAURI

PIERRE GASLY

Started **17th** - Result **11th**

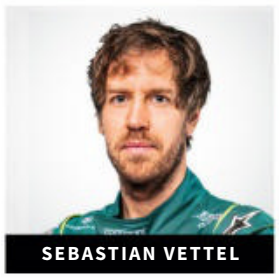
7 Unlucky to miss a late Q1 shot, but a better earlier banker would have helped. In the race he opted for inters from the off with "nothing to lose", and his pace and attacking were strong, passing Zhou and Ricciardo in successive laps. Did the ailing Magnussen too and tracked Vettel to the finish.

YUKI TSUNODA

Started **11th** – Result **17th**

5 Touching the inside chicane-approach wall led to a stoppage and left-front damage. Held his position early on, followed Vettel with a early inters stop. Couldn't match Gasly's pace or progress, trapped in the pack. Had a sloppy late solo Ste Devote off and an extra stop to shed worn mediums.

ASTON MARTIN


SEBASTIAN VETTEL

Started **9th** — Result **10th**

8 Kudos for making Q3 and recovering after making a very early stop for inters. Poor pace on the full wets was behind this call, but then he produced a confident drive, despite regretting come in for inters so early. That all included a pouncing post-Rascasse slide pass on Zhou.

LANCE STROLL

Started **18th** - Result **14th**

3 Lost FP3 by knocking his front wing against the Swimming Pool exit barriers, made a mistake on his last Q1 run and so qualified 18th. Hitting the Massenet barriers behind the safety car was very poor even if it didn't cost him a place. But it did cause a right-rear puncture.

WILLIAMS

NICHOLAS LATIFI

Started **19th** – Result **15th**

4 Comfortable with car balance come qualifying, but Williams's late Q1 track evolution run plan scuppered by the red flag. Blamed a throttle issue for poor crash at the hairpin under the safety car. Post-Schumacher red flag pace erased a nine-second gap to Zhou as Alonso held up the pack.

ALEX ALBON

Started **16th** - Result **18th**

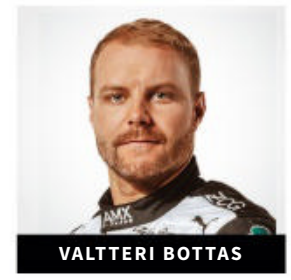
2 Disgracefully delayed Leclerc for nearly a full lap, flat-spotted his hards, clashed with Schumacher, then clipped the Rascasse wall and punctured a tyre. Penalised for cutting chicane in Schumacher fight, also warned for track limits abuse. Retired with unexplained bottoming-out issue.

ALFA ROMEO

ZHOU GUANYU

Started **20th** · Result **16th**

5 Lost a second flier to Q1 Tsunoda red flag. Was in the thick of the action fighting the recovering early stoppers and there were a few slips. His chicane off and big save there came from trying to pressure Tsunoda, but showed great reflexes not to have a Kimi Raikkonen 2008-esque shunt.


VALTTERI BOTTAS

Started **12th** — Result **9th**

7 Q2 elimination hurt as several slower cars qualified ahead, but had a positive race. Decisive call to go straight from the full wets to slicks and that got him by Vettel and Tsunoda. Was trapped in the Alonso train, but was close enough to Ocon when things opened up later to gain a bonus spot.

HAAS

KEVIN MAGNUSSEN

Started **13th** - Result **20th**

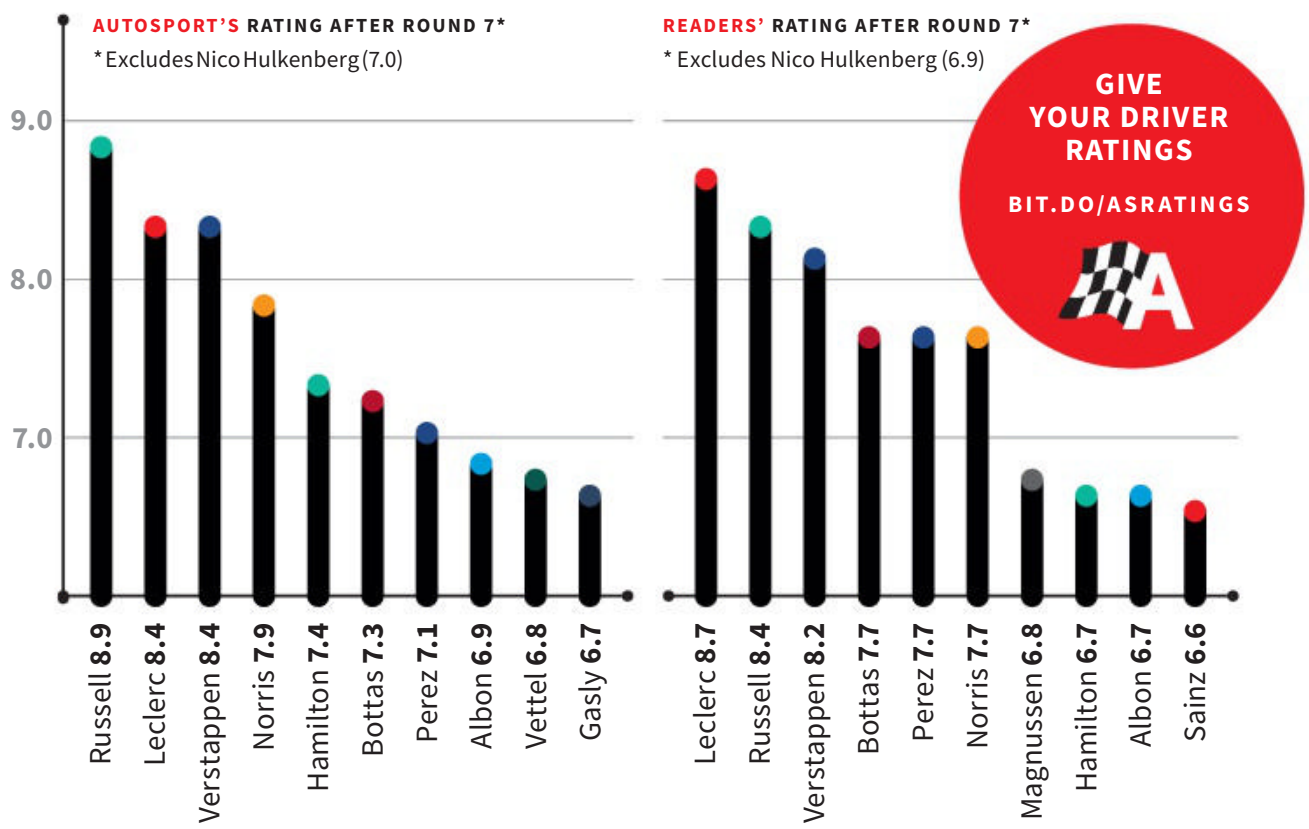
6 Could have made Q3. Was relishing his fight with Bottas during the wet early stages and had just decided the no-inters strategy was best when he had an ERS water leak. Had no choice but to retire to the pits, from where he was a witness to Schumacher's massive accident.

MICK SCHUMACHER

Started **15th** - Result **19th**

3 His Swimming Pool crash while chasing Zhou – just after being lapped – was a large error. His issue was moving "about 10cm" off-line and hitting a wet patch, and the correction speared him off and into heavy car damage. Also qualified down in 15th after not nailing his final Q2 middle sector.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS



Ericsson hold his nerve for the biggest prize

Chip Ganassi's team was strong again at Indy and, when dominator Scott Dixon made an uncharacteristic error, its Swedish star was ready

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

Marcus Ericsson's topline career has been pockmarked by little bobbles at high-pressure moments, but lately he's been showing iron resolve in IndyCar races. Last year in Detroit, he held off Rinus VeeKay and Pato O'Ward to score his first IndyCar win. Later that summer, Ericsson delivered an unlikely triumph in Nashville with a damaged car after taking off from the back of a rival in the early laps. If it took some good fortune and great tactics to get him to the front of the pack that day, he was unshakeable once there and it was Colton Herta who crashed in pursuit.

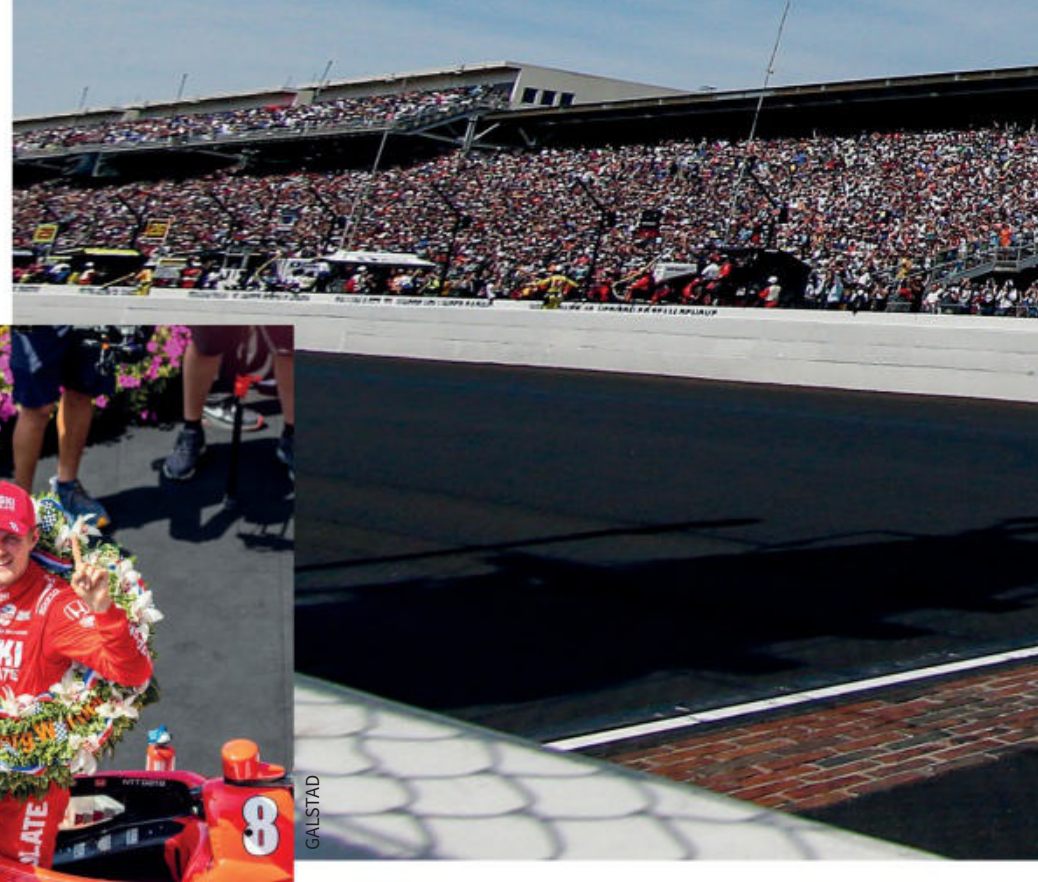
But if he thought *that* was pressure... well, last Sunday was something else again. And he responded beautifully to score Chip Ganassi Racing's fifth Indianapolis 500 triumph 10 years after its previous and become only the second Swedish winner of the event, after Kenny Brack in 1999.

For much of the 106th running of the Indy 500, Ericsson didn't appear to be Ganassi's most likely victor, but cometh the hour, cometh the man.

Once Ed Carpenter Racing's arch disruptor Rinus VeeKay had been squeezed back into third place on lap three, Scott Dixon and Alex Palou took it in turns to lead, each helping the other save fuel. Despite these efforts, they had to stop on laps 30 and 31 respectively, whereas Ericsson, who'd been sitting in the draft in fourth, stretched the fuel in his Honda-powered car to lap 33. Meanwhile, the Arrow McLaren SP Dallara-Chevrolets of Pato O'Ward and Felix Rosenqvist, seventh and eighth through that first stint, pitted as late as lap 35.

IMS

Chip Ganassi signals his fifth Indy 500 win



GALSTAD

VeeKay emerged from the pits in a net third place and was fast enough to pass Dixon again to take second position. Then, on lap 38, his car twitched uncontrollably at Turn 2 and sent the young Dutchman into the SAFER barrier.

At the restart, Palou and Dixon were able to resume their back 'n' forth, while O'Ward, who'd received excellent service from his AMSP crew, swiftly demoted Ericsson to grab third.

On lap 68, the Dixon-Palou show up front lost a member. Callum Ilott had squirmed and slid his Juncos Hollinger Racing machine into the SAFER barrier at Turn 2 and brought out the second caution on lap 69. Just before this occurred, Dixon and 12th-placed Conor Daly in another Carpenter car had pitted, but now the pitlane was closed, as it always is in caution periods. Palou was only about one second from making it in without getting pinged by Race Control, but instead he had to drive down pitlane without stopping. But he was now running on fumes, and so he had to stop for fuel. The punishment for emergency services in a closed pit is to restart from the back of the field. Barring a miracle, his winning chances were gone.

Daly, in front of his cheering home crowd, was only too pleased to become Dixon's new sparring partner up front, with O'Ward

Marcus Ericsson crosses the yard of bricks to join Kenny Brack as a Swedish Indy 500 winner

watching them from third, just ahead of Ericsson and Tony Kanaan.

On lap 106 came the crash that most had been predicting for the past two weeks: Romain Grosjean was into the SAFER barrier at (where else?) Turn 2. The ex-Formula 1 driver was winded, puzzled, apologetic, but thankfully uninjured.

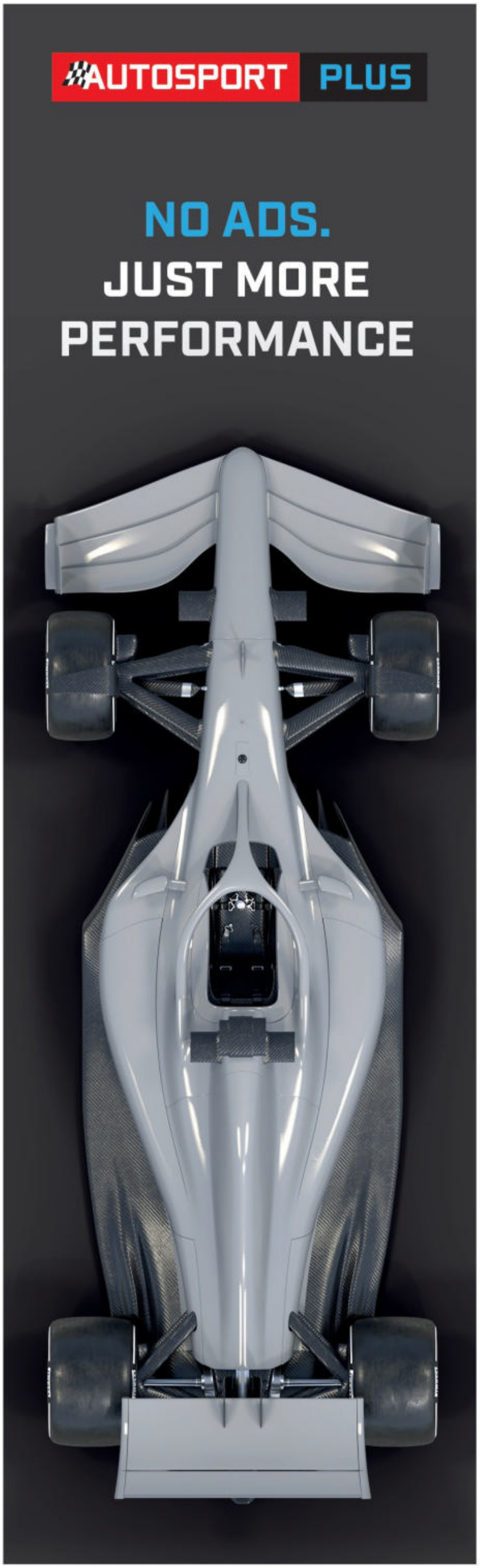
Again, Daly had managed to pit just before the yellow came on and the pits closed so, when his rivals all stopped, he took the lead. It didn't last long, however. Dixon, O'Ward and Dreyer & Reinbold Racing's Santino Ferrucci all slipstreamed past him on the front straight even before they reached Turn 1, although Daly would blast by Ferrucci down the back straight to reclaim third position, and Rosenqvist would also demote DRR's plucky little one-off entry. Behind them ran two more Ganassi cars, Kanaan and Ericsson in sixth and seventh.

There was then stasis at the front, with O'Ward apparently

"On lap 106 came the crash most had been predicting: Romain Grosjean was into the barrier"

unwilling or unable to swap the lead with Dixon. The 2008 winner and six-time IndyCar champion was going to have to do the the same way Simon Pagenaud did in 2019, trying to make it work on fuel while sitting out front and therefore burning up more than his rivals. No surprise, then, that his next pitstop came on lap 142, while Rosenqvist went to 143 and O'Ward to 144. The Mexican emerged ahead.

There was then a caution period for Scott McLaughlin, who »



Dixon and Palou worked together, but both were undone by pit penalties

ABBOTT

had a shunt in Turn 3 that stretched down the short chute and saw the Team Penske car make a second impact at Turn 4.

As the leader, O'Ward was a sitting duck at the restart, and he was immediately passed by Dixon down the front straight, while the second AMSP car of Rosenqvist reasserted itself in third after being threatened by Daly and Ferrucci.

This time, O'Ward kept up with Dixon and moved to the front for a few laps before the Ganassi driver reasserted himself. At this point, AMSP very wisely split its strategy, bringing in Rosenqvist as soon as the final pitstop window opened on lap 172, while Ganassi pulled Dixon in on lap 175, and O'Ward stopped on lap 177. By then O'Ward had the news that, sensationally, Dixon's sudden lock-up on his way into the pits had led to him breaking the pitlane speed limit — the dominant force of the previous couple of hours would need to serve a drivethrough penalty. He emerged 26th.

If Dixon's dream of a second Indy win was crushed for another year, despite him breaking Al Unser's 29-year-old record for most laps led in the 500, the Ganassi team still had hope.

On lap 181, Ericsson, who had stopped on the same lap as O'Ward, passed him and closed up on Rosenqvist, whose early stop meant he'd emerged ahead of his team-mate. Two laps later, the two Swedes swapped places so, once the off-strategy runners had also made their final stops, Ericsson was into the lead on lap 190. And comprehensively so: he soon pulled a three-second margin over O'Ward — barring pitstop sequences, this was the biggest lead

Dixon leads the field away at the start of the 106th Indy 500

IMS

"We came out third, caught Felix and Pato and passed them. I hoped it was the winning move"

anyone had enjoyed all afternoon. It was all going smoothly.

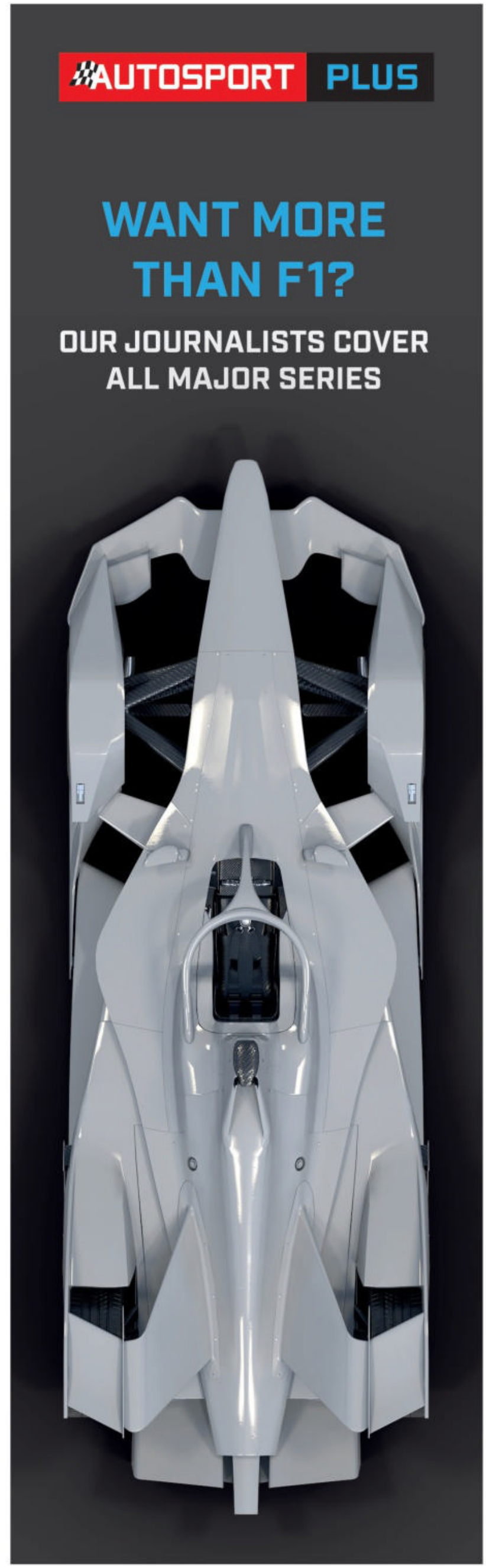
"We came out third and caught Felix and Pato and passed them, pulled a gap," recalled Ericsson. "I was hoping that was the race-winning move. Had that 3s gap. We had it covered. The only thing that could stop us was a caution, and of course that caution came."

On lap 194, Ericsson's rookie team-mate Jimmie Johnson struck the Turn 2 wall and out came the caution flag. It was a big hit (small hits are rare at Indy), there was a lot of debris scattered, and Johnson's self-extrication was not the work of a moment. So Race Control, to try to ensure that the race didn't finish under caution, turned yellow to red, and the remaining 27 runners trickled into pitlane to allow the track to be cleared.

"It's not supposed to be easy to win the 500," said Ericsson. "Those 10 minutes sitting there in the pitlane during that red flag was some of the hardest 10 minutes of my life probably, thinking what to do, thinking that I'm leading the biggest race in the world, and I'm that close to winning it."

By the time the field was rolling again, there would be a two-lap shootout for glory. Had Ericsson lost his nerve, he'd have lost the race, for no restart leader had thus far managed to hold onto the lead by Turn 1. But he timed his getaway off Turn 4 to perfection, and then wildly snaked back and forth across the track to try to break the tow. It worked and he was unthreatened into Turn 1, the focus temporarily switching to Rosenqvist, who'd used his team-mate's tow to try to slice down the inside of Kanaan. The 47-year-old 2013 winner was having none of that, however, and hung on around the outside of Turn 1 to reassert himself in third by Turn 2.

Down the back straight, again Ericsson slalomed to maintain his advantage and it worked... to a point. But it perhaps made him a tad cautious into Turn 3 and so, along the short chute and through Turn 4, O'Ward was back with him. Ericsson weaved so far left onto the front straight it appeared momentarily as if he was heading »



Kanaan hopes to be back for another crack after finishing third

GALSTAD

into the pits, but his pursuer doggedly followed him, and approaching Turn 1 for the final time he pulled out and drew alongside the Ganassi Dallara-Honda. But he was on the outside, and Ericsson had necessarily eased right, too, to take the racing line. O'Ward had to breathe the throttle and concede, and his challenge was over. Even before Sage Karam brought a slightly early conclusion to proceedings by crashing his DRR car at Turn 2 and bringing out the caution flag, Ericsson had broken his rival's challenge. He ran out a deserving winner, having delivered under the greatest pressure in racing.

"I knew Pato was going to have a run on me because we've seen all month it's really hard to defend when you're up front," said Ericsson. "I was actually sitting during dinner here at the Speedway on the infield last night talking with Dario [Franchitti] about this type of scenario, if I'm leading when it's towards the end of the race the last couple laps, what to do, how to break the tow of the car behind, how to place the car…

"I just tried to go out and execute that plan I had made in my head. Pato had a really good run on me. I wanted to put him on the outside because I knew it was going to be hard to go around my outside. I was not going to lift; there was no way I was going to lift.

O'Ward, here ahead of team-mate Rosenqvist, came close to a first Indy

GALSTAD

"I tried to go out and execute that plan I had made in my head. Pato had a really good run on me"

I just kept my foot down, and that was the race-winning move."

O'Ward was an unhappy second, his gripe apparently not with Ericsson, but with Chevy for not producing the power to get him around the Ganassi car, despite running substantially less wing. Kanaan admitted that no, he didn't want this to be his last Indy, and he would try to improve on his still fine third place, and Rosenqvist was fourth, probably secretly happy that the limelight hadn't been stolen by an O'Ward win.

Alexander Rossi climbed from 20th on the grid to fifth after a disappointing couple of weeks for Andretti Autosport. Grosjean's exit was the worst of it, but Herta's back-flipping shunt on Carb Day meant switching to a back-up car and no track time to give it even a systems check beforehand. Little wonder he couldn't progress from his 25th starting spot, and eventually he quit at two-thirds distance with a throttle-sensor problem.

Team Penske also had a disappointing day, over and above the McLaughlin shunt. Will Power climbed to seventh on the opening lap but then began suffering increasingly acute oversteer that saw him drop down the order. That couldn't be cured until the final couple of stints, by which time he'd also hampered himself with a stall while leaving the pits. Remarkably, his team-mate Josef Newgarden did the same, and so the pair of them finished 15th and 13th respectively.

Palou's recovery drive to ninth could perhaps prove crucial in the IndyCar championship fight, but last Sunday belonged to his under-the-radar team-mate in the #8 car, and deservedly so.

NEXT REPORT
DETROIT
9 JUNE ISSUE

POWERED BY motorsport STATS

THE WINNER'S LATE ROLLERCOASTER RIDE

Caution periods can mentally bruise or boost you, as Marcus Ericsson discovered last Sunday. Having pulled out a three-second lead in the closing stint, he was mortified to see the caution come out on lap 194 for a shunt for his team-mate Jimmie Johnson, and was maddened still further when this became a red flag.

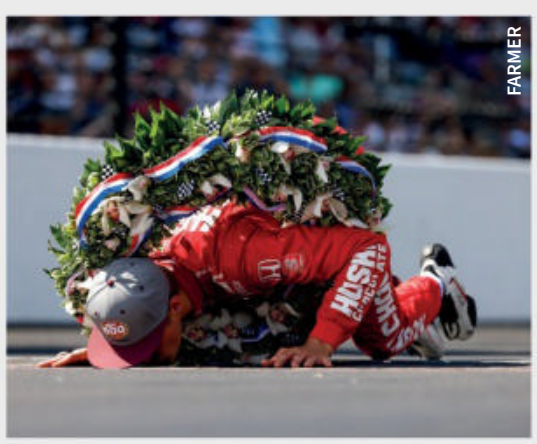
"First I was just angry because I thought I had the race won. I knew there was a big risk for a caution, but I couldn't believe it was one of the Ganassi cars! I was like, 'Guys, don't we communicate and say we have a car winning the 500 here, have a big gap? No risks, right?' I'm not trying to put the blame on Jimmie here, but it was tough to take that in and I was a bit frustrated.

"Then Mike [O'Gara, strategist] and Brad [Goldberg, race engineer] came on the radio. They're like, 'We still have this. We still have the car, we still have the driver to win this, so focus.' I sort of put aside the frustration… I even said to myself, 'Hey, this is the biggest race in the world, it's not going to be easy to win it, you have to work for it.'

"I tried to focus, calm myself down and make a plan exactly where I wanted to accelerate on the restart, exactly where I wanted to position the car for the last two laps. It was definitely tough sitting there waiting, knowing that you have the biggest win of your life just in front of you, but still a lot of fast cars trying to steal it from you."

The caution that emerged on the final lap initially didn't bring him joy either even though it confirmed a win that by then was truly his. "When that caution came out, I thought it was going to be another restart. I was like, 'I can't believe it, another one!' Then they're like, 'We're coming to the flag under caution.' First I was angry, then I just realised that won me the race!"

Later the genial Swede was asked a question about being the overlooked driver in the Ganassi team, but he said it didn't matter: "I think when you have Dixie and TK and JJ and Palou the defending champion, I think it's easy that the focus will be on them for sure. Maybe after today it will change a bit."


FARMER

Rossi finished fifth at the end of a tough Indy for Andretti Autosport

GALSTAD

RESULTS ROUND 6/16, INDIANAPOLIS (USA), 29 MAY (200 LAPS – 500.000 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME	GRID
1	**Marcus Ericsson** (SWE)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	2h51m00.6432s	5
2	**Pato O'Ward** (MEX)	Arrow McLaren SP / Dallara-Chevrolet	+1.7929s	7
3	**Tony Kanaan** (BRA)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+3.5173s	6
4	**Felix Rosenqvist** (SWE)	Arrow McLaren SP / Dallara-Chevrolet	+4.1267s	8
5	**Alexander Rossi** (USA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	+4.9804s	20
6	**Conor Daly** (USA)	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+5.0799s	18
7	**Helio Castroneves** (BRA)	Meyer Shank Racing / Dallara-Honda	+6.5614s	27
8	**Simon Pagenaud** (FRA)	Meyer Shank Racing / Dallara-Honda	+7.0937s	16
9	**Alex Palou** (ESP)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+8.2446s	2
10	**Santino Ferrucci** (USA)	Dreyer & Reinbold Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+9.8329s	15
11	**Juan Pablo Montoya** (COL)	Arrow McLaren SP / Dallara-Chevrolet	+10.7647s	30
12	**JR Hildebrand** (USA)	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	+11.6554s	17
13	**Josef Newgarden** (USA)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+11.8276s	14
14	**Graham Rahal** (USA)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+12.4253s	21
15	**Will Power** (AUS)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	+13.3036s	11
16	**David Malukas** (USA)	Dale Coyne Racing with HMD / Dallara-Honda	+13.6283s	13
17	**Kyle Kirkwood** (USA)	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	+14.5864s	28
18	**Christian Lundgaard** (DNK)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	+16.3308s	31
19	**Ed Carpenter** (USA)	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	+16.5602s	4
20	**Devlin DeFrancesco** (CAN)	Andretti Steinbrenner Autosport / Dallara-Honda	+16.8218s	24
21	**Scott Dixon** (NZL)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	+18.1238s	1
22	**Marco Andretti** (USA)	Andretti Herta with Marco & Curb-Agajanian / Dallara-Honda	+25.2002s	23
23	**Sage Karam** (USA)	Dreyer & Reinbold Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	199 laps-accident	22
24	**Jack Harvey** (GBR)	Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing / Dallara-Honda	-1 lap	32
25	**Takuma Sato** (JPN)	Dale Coyne Racing with RWR / Dallara-Honda	-1 lap	10
26	**Stefan Wilson** (GBR)	DragonSpeed/Cusick Motorsports / Dallara-Chevrolet	-2 laps	33
27	**Dalton Kellett** (CAN)	AJ Foyt Enterprises / Dallara-Chevrolet	-2 laps	29
28	**Jimmie Johnson** (USA)	Chip Ganassi Racing / Dallara-Honda	193 laps-accident	12
29	**Scott McLaughlin** (NZL)	Team Penske / Dallara-Chevrolet	150 laps-accident	26
30	**Colton Herta** (USA)	Andretti Autosport with Curb-Agajanian / Dallara-Honda	129 laps-throttle	25
31	**Romain Grosjean** (FRA)	Andretti Autosport / Dallara-Honda	105 laps-accident	9
32	**Callum Ilott** (GBR)	Juncos Hollinger Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	68 laps-accident	19
33	**Rinus van Kalmthout** (NLD)	Ed Carpenter Racing / Dallara-Chevrolet	38 laps-accident	3

Winner's average speed 175.428mph. **Fastest lap** **Ericsson** 40.0263s, 224.852mph.

CHAMPIONSHIP **1 Ericsson 226**; 2 **O'Ward** 213; 3 **Palou** 212; 4 **Power** 202; 5 **Newgarden** 174; 6 **Dixon** 166; 7 **McLaughlin** 162; 8 **Pagenaud** 157; 9 **Rosenqvist** 154; 10 **Herta** 142.

BTCC THRUXTON

Hampshire crumbles to Cookie again

After his tour de force at Brands Hatch, the BTC Racing Honda star was invincible at Thruxton as he moved onto nine wins at the circuit

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP motorsport IMAGES

To one of the greatest defensive drives of the current British Touring Car Championship era previous time out at Brands Hatch, Josh Cook last weekend at Thruxton added one of the most remarkable overtaking moves. He also claimed two more race wins, but hey, you wouldn't expect anything else of him, would you? The West Countryman was already tied as the BTCC wins record holder at the Hampshire speedbowl on seven; he's now clearly ahead on nine – and he's leading the championship.

It was a weekend of supremacy for the BTC Racing Honda Civic Type R star such as we rarely see in the BTCC. Following two wins at Brands, Cook was up to second in the championship, meaning he was allowed just 1.5 seconds per lap of hybrid deployment in qualifying, and pegged back to a nine-lap restriction in race one, which became 10 in races two and three. It's easy to hypothesise that under the old success-ballast system he could never have achieved what he did last weekend. After all, he'd have arrived at Thruxton – his local BTCC venue – carrying 66kg on the Honda. And his peers, especially the front-wheel-drive contenders, are almost universal in loving this new format of hybrid penalties. But, perversely, Cook had remarked at Brands that he preferred the ballast, that his qualifying average in 2021 suggested that BTC had properly mastered the art of dealing with the extra weight.

Even after setting the fastest time across the two sessions of free practice, Cook opined that a top-five position in qualifying would be satisfactory, and that "the restriction in hybrid is quite powerful" at this circuit. Yet, while pre-weekend points leader Tom Ingram (with no hybrid at all in qualifying) laboured to eighth on the grid, Cook claimed pole by 0.077 seconds from the West Surrey Racing-run BMW 330e M Sport of Jake Hill (who, like team-mate Colin Turkington, was on 4.5s).

"For us, when things are going really well, you get into a bit of a rhythm," offered Cook. "You become confident. But we had a balance-shift from free practice and we

Cook led home Hill in two relentless chases in the opening pair of races

“Cook was already tied as the BTCC wins record holder at Thruxton. Now he’s two clear on nine”

had to make changes.” This was something echoed by many, and meant Cook was down in seventh position before his final run of three vaulted him onto pole: “Because it was challenging, it makes it a bit more rewarding. It’s hard work. Because we had the deficit of the hybrid I had to make sure everything else was spot-on. And that also makes it rewarding. It means you can still make a difference [as a driver].”

Hill was finding the high-speed turns of Thruxton no drama a few days after a 160mph blowout in a Panoz at Spa’s Blanchimont sweeper, and topped the times after the second runs. But his final bid was scuppered when his former Motorbase team-mate Sam Osborne smacked into Dan Rowbottom as the Honda unexpectedly slowed to enter the pitlane. “There was bodywork all over the chicane, so I had to abort the lap,” rued Hill, who nevertheless kept up his 100% record of qualifying front-rows in the WSR BMW. “Then I tried to go again, but the tyres were out of the window.”

This pair would be the focus of the first two races. In the first, Hill predictably got »

FIRST LAP RUINS IT FOR CAMMISH AND INGRAM

Cammish gets turned around by Taylor-Smith during the final race

Thruxton’s neatly mown grass replaced hybrid as the main topic of grumbling last weekend. Or, to be more specific, it was the cuttings blocking radiators from off-track excursions. But such is the fond regard in which the circuit management is held that it was tough to find anyone who wanted to sound off about it in public.

The green stuff caused the downfall of pre-weekend points leader Tom Ingram as collateral damage from a first-lap scuffle between Dan Cammish and Dan Rowbottom. Cammish was delighted to qualify his Motorbase Ford Focus third, just 0.081s off pole, and felt a corner had been turned after his sour start to the season. But, as he turned in at Noble on the opening lap, he was clipped by the Team Dynamics Honda Civic of Rowbottom and pitched into a spin, and Ingram’s Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N speared off the road in avoidance.

Both Cammish and Ingram were forced to the pits. Both needed grass removing from their radiators, and Cammish had a punctured left-rear tyre replaced. While Cammish never managed to get himself back into contention on the day, Ingram at least charged from 21st on the grid to eighth in race two, and to sixth in the finale.

‘Rowbo’ was exonerated and had a strong day

Both were pretty grumpy about Rowbottom. “I didn’t even know he was there,” grimaced Cammish. “I turned in and got a hit – it’s not like he was a decent way alongside. They told me in the clerk’s office he was opportunistic. Well, to me ‘opportunistic’ now means I’m a lap down and last on the grid for race two.” Ingram added: “We shouldn’t be causing shunts like that on lap one. I get that we were four-wide, but we should not be sticking our nose in at Noble, because you can very easily cause 200 grand’s worth of damage.”

But, of course, no one intends to make contact with anyone at such a high-speed corner. “It was a closing gap; it wasn’t deliberate at all,” countered Rowbottom. “I came off the throttle as soon as I saw Dan was coming across at the angle he was, and I felt like I got a bit of a push in the back. It wasn’t malicious.”

‘Rowbo’ continued on his way for a very strong day of 5-5-4 finishes, despite a blade snapping on his front anti-roll bar in race two. Ingram also sported damage in this race – 20mm of toe out from an early collision with Ricky Collard – on his charge up the order. He was in the wars again in the finale. A clash with Jake Hill left the Hyundai unscathed, but loosened the rear bumper of the BMW, which was black-and-orange-flagged into the pits for attention. He rejoined on the tail of the hapless Cammish, who’d been turned around by Aron Taylor-Smith’s Cupra but nevertheless won their battle for a glorious 20th.

Taylor-Smith was censured for his sin, while the Ingram/Hill kerfuffle will be looked into next time at Oulton Park.

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Three podiums for 'Mr Hoverer' Sutton put him second in points

a stronger start using the rear-wheel-drive traction of the BMW. But, equally predictably, Cook's front-wheel-drive Honda switched on its tyres sooner. All he had to do was make an early move count, which he did at the first opportunity by sweeping around the outside of Hill into the Complex. Job done, and Cook was 1.261s to the good by the end of lap one.

The gap grew by less than 0.1s next time around, before Hill began eroding it. They were together by half-distance, but, just as at Brands under pursuit from the same driver, Cook was steadfast. He was allowed six laps of hybrid use, with Hill on eight, and it was a game of strategy as much as high-speed precision driving. That precision included Cook's regular skimming of the grass at the Goodwood turn, which meant a film of cuttings shrouded much of Hill's radiator, luckily with no ill-effect. "I got a really good start," said Cook. "Then after the first few laps I looked after the car. I was saving hybrid and tyre for the end to cover myself." Hill, in turn, thought Cook's front tyres would wilt, but "sod's law my rears went off. I kept him under pressure but he didn't make any mistakes."

Cook was determined to get a better start for the second race, but his ambition got the better of him, and this set up his stunning pass on Hill for the lead. The Honda's launch was OK, but the second phase was less impressive and Ash Sutton was able to briefly squeeze his Motorbase Ford Focus up the inside into Allard. "Jake did me off the line in the first one, and I was really trying to prevent that from happening again," admitted Cook. "I asked too much of the front tyres, and lit them up too much."

But as they emerged from Church Corner the Honda had momentum and, as they sped up Woodham Hill, Cook remembered a move Hill himself pulled last year on Tom Oliphant — who ironically was driving the very same BMW that Hill is pedalling this season. He lanced around the outside into the first apex of the chicane to nose in front, and all it needed was Hill to concede what was already a lost cause at the second apex. "There was one sniff of an opportunity," continued Cook. "Jake's move on Oliphant was in the back of my mind and I thought I'd give it a pop. I don't think I could have waited much longer because if the BMW had got up to speed [with its tyres switched on] he'd have been gone. Fair play to Jake. He gave me racing room."

As he had in the first race, Cook kept his hybrid deployment — now down to a maximum of five laps — in hand for the late stages, by which time Hill was again on his bumper. He was informed over the radio that Hill (theoretically on a maximum six laps hybrid) was doing the same, but there was a sound reason for this: it wasn't working! "We lost it on lap two [the first time it can be deployed]," he said. Of Cook setting up his move, he added: "I had a bit of understeer through Church, got a bad exit, and he had a great exit."

"Jake's move on Oliphant last year was in the back of my mind and I thought I'd give it a pop"

Sutton made sure the podium positions were identical to those in race one, and indeed Turkington and Rowbottom extended that pattern to the top five. After his qualifying nightmare at Brands, the reigning champion was happy that work on the Ford had transformed its pace. In the sister car, Dan Cammish enjoyed the full 15s of hybrid use following his early-season tribulations and qualified third; Sutton had 3s and planted his in fifth spot — but it could have been pole.

The three-time champion was quickest on the first runs in qualifying, and this time was the one he relied upon. But, had he linked up all his quickest sectors, he'd have been top of the pile. "We didn't put a lap together," he said. "I had a lock-up on my best lap and lost three tenths, and didn't keep it anyway [it was deleted due to a track-limits transgression, but it wouldn't have improved on fifth place]. Then I was on to match that, but Tom Chilton spun at Church. It's annoying, but we're on a learning curve."

Sutton's Sunday was set up beautifully by a terrific start to race one, and by the time the field emerged from the Complex he was in front of Cammish (whose day would imminently be ruined, see panel, p37) and Turkington. As at the Donington opening round, he clearly didn't have the pace of the lead battle, and indeed had to repass »

Shedden's tread came off a tyre in race one. He recovered, then his day went up in smoke

Deja vu: Morgan leads Turkington to reversed-grid Thruxton victory

Rowbottom around the outside at the Noble kink in a mid-race fight. But the Focus was improved throughout the day. Sutton's third position in race two was more clear-cut, and he replicated that position again in the reversed-grid finale.

In this final act, Sutton found himself behind the BMWs of Adam Morgan and Turkington, whose Sundays had converged after vastly differing Saturdays. Morgan's Ciceley Motorsport team tried a set-up that had worked at Donington and Brands but turned out not to at Thruxton, and he and team-mate George Gamble qualified 12th and 16th respectively. Turkington, meanwhile, was some way outside the top 10 before nailing a lap on the final run to put himself fourth. "To quote John [Waterman, his engineer], 'You went from PNowhere to P3', which then became P4," he smiled. "I struggled with too much understeer, but we threw something at it for the third run and dragged a really important lap out of it."

Turkington got a bit swamped exiting the Complex on the opening lap of race one after finding himself off-line while battling Sutton and Cammish, but recovered to fourth, while Morgan chipped his way up to seventh. Later on, Turkington briefly challenged Sutton for third before repeating his earlier result, with Morgan now sixth.

This put Morgan on the front row for the curtain closer alongside reversed-grid poleman Jason Plato, having his best weekend yet in a BTC Honda. But the veteran got too much wheelspin at the start. Morgan, Turkington, Rowbottom and Sutton immediately got ahead, then Rowbottom's challenge on Turkington on lap two failed to pay off, and the Team Dynamics Honda instead lost places to Sutton and Plato.

The leading quartet broke away with Morgan in front, and now the Ciceley BMW's pace was as good as anything else's, allowing the Lancastrian to make it a clean sweep of wins on the day for ginger-haired drivers. It wasn't easy though, and Morgan was mindful of the ghosts of 2021 at Thruxton, another reversed-grid race in which he kept Turkington at bay, and in which he'd somehow escaped a penalty for bypassing the chicane on one lap. "We put a lot of time and effort into it last night, discussing all sorts of options, and today it was a different car," smiled Morgan. "It was almost a carbon-copy of last year. The chicane was always in the back of mind and I probably braked five metres earlier than I should do all weekend. On the last lap I probably braked 20 metres early just to be safe!"

This stacked up what was now a leading trio, allowing Sutton to attempt a move on Turkington. "All race I was trying to show my nose on the inside, but this time I switched to the outside," he said. "I got three quarters of the way around the outside, but he was going to turn in [to the second apex] regardless, so I just bailed out."

But this was a very encouraging day for Sutton. He's not won a race yet, but is now second in the points in a Ford that doesn't yet seem a consistent match for the other leading contenders. "We've made a lot of changes to the car before the weekend and during the weekend," he explained. "I feel like I've been just hovering, there or thereabouts. Getting a mega start to race one was a key part of the weekend. Balance-wise we weren't where we wanted it to be, but we improved it through the day. We went from being the cork in the bottle to being the one attacking."

Plato was miffed at mid-race contact with Sutton in a move similar to the one Sutton gave up on with Turkington: "I was a bit overly wound up, overcommitted at Goodwood, slid wide and just got a bit of tyre pick-up, and at Church that put me on a wider line and it sucks you off." After a bounce across the grass he was into the pits.

That promoted the fight between Rowbottom, Cook and Ingram. 'Rowbo' held off the present-and-past championship leaders in another train, but that was OK for Cook. His tally of 55 points from Thruxton exceeds even his score of 50 from Brands. And now long-time nearly man Ingram is under grave threat of finding himself usurped as first in line to the BTCC throne.

No points for Plato after being drawn on pole for reversed-grid finale

P72 SUPPORTS REPORT
Round-up of all the action from British F4, Minis and more

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RESULTS ROUND 3/10, THRUXTON (GBR), 29 MAY RACE 1 (16 LAPS – 37.696 MILES)

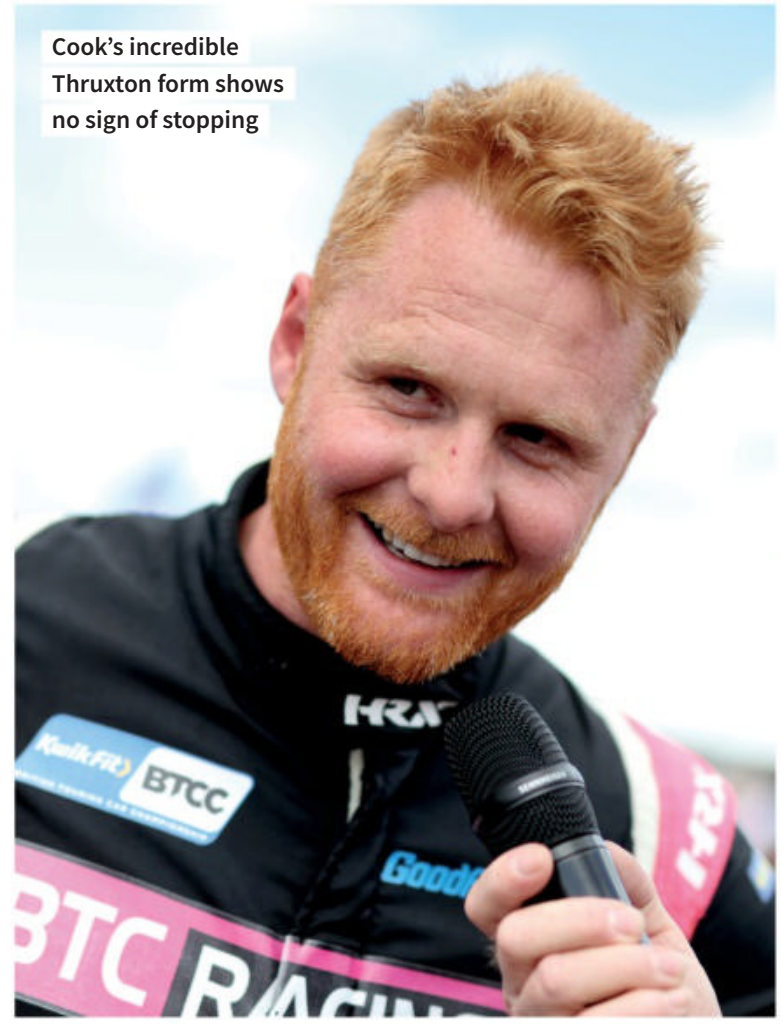
POS	DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	**Josh Cook** (GBR)	BTC Racing / Honda Civic Type R	20m40.575s
2	**Jake Hill** (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport	+0.900s
3	**Ash Sutton** (GBR)	Motorbase Performance / Ford Focus	+8.957s
4	**Colin Turkington** (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport	+9.400s
5	**Dan Rowbottom** (GBR)	Team Dynamics / Honda Civic Type R	+9.816s
6	**Jason Plato** (GBR)	BTC Racing / Honda Civic Type R	+10.208s
7	**Adam Morgan** (GBR)	Ciceley Motorsport / BMW 330e M Sport	+14.615s
8	**Dan Lloyd** (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N	+15.032s
9	**Stephen Jelley** (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330e M Sport	+15.625s
10	**Ash Hand** (GBR)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra	+18.254s
11	**Rory Butcher** (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport	+22.013s
12	**Tom Chilton** (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N	+24.513s
13	**Michael Crees** (GBR)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra	+25.387s
14	**George Gamble** (GBR)	Ciceley Motorsport / BMW 330e M Sport	+26.601s
15	**Aiden Moffat** (GBR)	Laser Tools Racing / Infiniti Q50	+29.194s
16	**Ricky Collard** (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla GR Sport	+30.422s
17	**Bobby Thompson** (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon	+31.232s
18	**Aron Taylor-Smith** (IRL)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon	+33.917s
19	**Sam Osborne** (GBR)	Motorbase Performance / Ford Focus	+34.540s
20	**Dexter Patterson** (GBR)	Laser Tools Racing / Infiniti Q50	+36.721s
21	**Tom Ingram** (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N	+45.393s
22	**Rick Parfitt** (GBR)	Team Hard / Infiniti Q50	+57.680s
23	**Will Powell** (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon	+1m04.760s
24	**Gordon Shedden** (GBR)	Team Dynamics / Honda Civic Type R	+1m15.902s
25	**Dan Cammish** (GBR)	Motorbase Performance / Ford Focus	-1 lap
26	**Nicolas Hamilton** (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon	-1 lap
R	**Jade Edwards** (GBR)	BTC Racing / Honda Civic Type R	10 laps-overheating
R	**Jack Butel** (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N	7 laps-overheating
R	**Ollie Jackson** (GBR)	Motorbase Performance / Ford Focus	4 laps-oil pressure

Winner's average speed 109.38mph. **Fastest lap** **Rowbottom** 1m16.400s, 111.01mph.

QUALIFYING

1 Cook 1m15.310s; 2 **Hill** 1m15.387s; 3 **Cammish** 1m15.391s; 4 **Turkington** 1m15.471s; 5 **Sutton** 1m15.526s; 6 **Rowbottom** 1m15.539s; 7 **Plato** 1m15.698s; 8 **Ingram** 1m15.713s; 9 **Shedden** 1m15.971s; 10 **Jelley** 1m16.002s; 11 **Hand** 1m16.024s; 12 **Morgan** 1m16.053s; 13 **Lloyd** 1m16.198s; 14 **Thompson** 1m16.211s; 15 **Butcher** 1m16.226s; 16 **Gamble** 1m16.248s; 17 **Moffat** 1m16.401s; 18 **Chilton** 1m16.529s; 19 **Crees** 1m16.533s; 20 **Taylor-Smith** 1m16.576s; 21 **Edwards** 1m16.596s; 22 **Osborne** 1m16.659s; 23 **Collard** 1m16.715s; 24 **Jackson** 1m16.828s; 25 **Hamilton** 1m16.993s; 26 **Patterson** 1m17.428s; 27 **Butel** 1m17.730s; 28 **Parfitt** 1m18.007s; 29 **Powell** 1m18.283s.

Rookie Hand, here leading team-mate Crees, was in the top 10 in all three races



Cook's incredible Thruxton form shows no sign of stopping

RACE 2 (16 LAPS – 37.696 MILES)
GRID RACE 2 Decided by result of Race 1.
1 Cook 20m38.196s; 2 **Hill** +0.487s; 3 **Sutton** +3.067s; 4 **Turkington** +3.717s; 5 **Rowbottom** +7.806s; 6 **Morgan** +8.763s; 7 **Plato** +10.488s; 8 **Ingram** +15.424s; 9 **Lloyd** +15.735s; 10 **Hand** +19.736s; 11 **Shedden** +20.844s; 12 **Crees** +21.559s; 13 **Butcher** +21.678s; 14 **Jelley** +23.146s; 15 **Chilton** +23.862s; 16 **Thompson** +23.926s; 17 **Collard** +24.178s; 18 **Cammish** +25.396s; 19 **Taylor-Smith** +38.980s; 20 **Gamble** +39.435s; 21 **Edwards** +39.712s; 22 **Powell** +46.538s; 23 **Osborne** +47.835s; 24 **Hamilton** +48.393s; 25 **Moffat** -2 laps; R **Patterson** 11 laps-throttle; R **Parfitt** 9 laps-power-steering; NC **Jackson** 5 laps; NS **Butel** engine.
Winner's average speed 109.59mph.
Fastest lap **Cook** 1m16.486s, 110.89mph.

RACE 3 (17 LAPS – 40.052 MILES)
GRID RACE 3 Decided by result of Race 2, with top seven reversed.
1 Morgan 22m49.005s; 2 **Turkington** +0.599s; 3 **Sutton** +1.003s; 4 **Rowbottom** +3.787s; 5 **Cook** +4.535s; 6 **Ingram** +4.744s; 7 **Lloyd** +7.884s; 8 **Crees** +8.168s; 9 **Hand** +8.638s; 10 **Butcher** +15.793s; 11 **Chilton** +16.611s; 12 **Thompson** +19.307s; 13 **Taylor-Smith** +21.837s; 14 **Gamble** +22.151s; 15 **Osborne** +24.587s; 16 **Jelley** +28.632s; 17 **Moffat** +29.028s; 18 **Jackson** +30.580s; 19 **Collard** +31.087s; 20 **Cammish** +37.286s; 21 **Hill** +37.541s; 22 **Parfitt** +1m05.089s; 23 **Butel** -1 lap; 24 **Plato** -1 lap; R **Shedden** 15 laps-engine; R **Edwards** 14 laps-damage/steering; R **Patterson** 12 laps-suspension; R **Powell** 7 laps-driveshaft; R **Hamilton** 5 laps-vibration.
Winner's average speed 105.32mph.
Fastest lap **Ingram** 1m16.793s, 110.44mph.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Cook 139; 2 **Sutton** 116; 3 **Turkington** 112; 4 **Ingram** 111; 5 **Hill** 103; 6 **Morgan** 86; 7 **Shedden** 72; 8 **Lloyd** 66; 9 **Butcher** 65; 10 **Rowbottom** 53.

NEXT EVENT

OULTON PARK 16 JUNE ISSUE
The BMWs seem quick everywhere. And Cheshire is historically BMW territory…

Phoenix Audi survives penalty to clinch race of attrition

NURBURGRING 24 HOURS
NURBURGRING (DEU)
28-29 MAY

Spectators returned to fill the hills and forests of the Eifel mountains around the legendary Nordschleife just in time to celebrate the 50th edition of Germany's greatest race, the Nurburgring 24 Hours. Some 230,000 onlookers witnessed a hard-fought race that eliminated a huge number of favourites predominantly in the first half, resulting in Audi Sport Team Phoenix celebrating a sixth victory in the classic both for itself and for Audi.

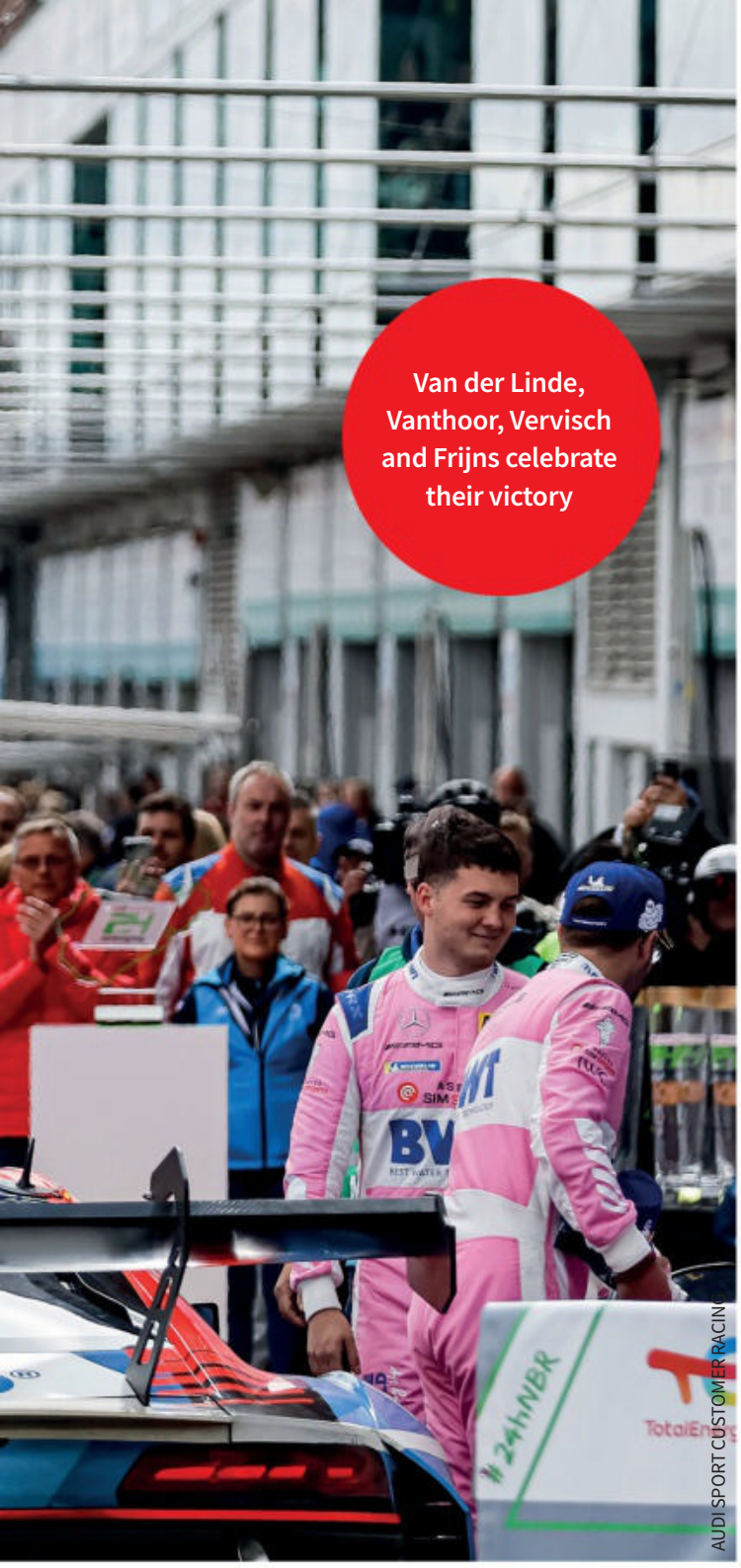
Unusually, the race ran almost entirely in dry, if cold, conditions, with temperatures falling to as low as 4 degrees Celsius — although more typically it was decided amid the infamous *Eifelwetter* with two hours to go. The battle for victory came down between the local teams from Meuspath: the Phoenix Audi shared by Kelvin van der Linde, Dries Vanthoor, Frederic Vervisch and Robin Frijns; and the GetSpeed Mercedes-AMG driven by Adam Christodoulou, Maximilian Gotz and Fabian Schiller. The rain only fell for a few minutes, but that was enough to flood the Grand Prix circuit while leaving most of the Nordschleife dry. With the Mercedes on slick tyres, Phoenix opted for cut slicks and that proved to be the race-winning decision for a battle that had been raging since the beginning of the night. The crucial tyre choice allowed van der Linde to pull out a minute's gap over his DTM rival Gotz.

But it was almost in vain when Phoenix made an uncharacteristic error at the last pitstop. Van der Linde was told to start the engine while the car was still being refuelled — a clear breach of the rules. The team immediately corrected the mistake by shutting the engine off so the Audi didn't gain a competitive advantage. Phoenix

TOP 10 RESULTS NURBURGRING 24 HOURS (DEU) 159 LAPS – 2507.43 MILES

GRUPPE C PHOTOGRAPHY

POS	DRIVERS	CAR	TIME
1	Kelvin **van der Linde**/Dries **Vanthoor**/Frederic **Vervisch**/Robin **Frijns**	Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo II	24h06m41.822s
2	Adam **Christodoulou**/Maximilian **Gotz**/Fabian **Schiller**	Mercedes-AMG GT3	+55.276s
3	Maro **Engel**/Jules **Gounon**/Daniel **Juncadella**	Mercedes-AMG GT3	+4m05.519s
4	Christopher **Haase**/Nico **Muller**/Patric **Niederhauser**/Rene **Rast**	Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo II	+5m12.864s
5	Jakub **Giermaziak**/Kim Luis **Schramm**/Michele **Beretta**/Markus **Winkelhock**	Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo II	+7m25.468s
6	Patrick **Kolb**/Mattia **Drudi**/Christopher **Mies**/Patric **Niederhauser**	Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo II	+7m33.159s
7	Raffaele **Marciello**/Philip **Ellis**/Luca **Stolz**	Mercedes-AMG GT3	-1 lap
8	Hubert **Haupt**/Marvin **Dienst**/Nico **Bastian**/Gabriele **Piana**	Mercedes-AMG GT3	-1 lap
9	Jaxon **Evans**/Sven **Muller**/Patrick **Pilet**/Marco **Seefried**	Porsche 911 GT3-R	-2 laps
10	Axcil **Jefferies**/Jordan **Pepper**/Michele **Di Martino**/Maximilian **Hacklander**	Lamborghini Huracan GT3	-3 laps



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landed a €5000 fine and a 32-second time penalty, but it wasn't enough to cost it the race. GetSpeed had to settle for second and third, with its second entry shared by Maro Engel, Jules Gounon and Daniel Juncadella losing time twice thanks to a spin by Juncadella at night and a cut-slicks gamble that didn't pay off during an earlier shower on Sunday morning.

Four Audis and four Mercedes made it into the top 10, as both Porsche and BMW endured disasters. The manufacturers lost cars hand over fist, mostly during a wild first half of the race that featured world-class GT3 drivers making astounding rookie mistakes amid strong complaints by many drivers about slower cars — an issue likely to be the subject of further discussions. The most spectacular crash of the race marked the end for the 2021 race-winning Manthey Porsche 'Grello', with Laurens Vanthoor attempting an outrageous move against his brother Dries, resulting in a massive crash for the legendary car.

Only two out of the eight Porsche 911 GT3-Rs on the entry made it to the end, the leading 911 being the Falken car that was forced into an early pitstop on lap two from which it could never fully recover.

The result was even worse for BMW, which lost all its Pro cars. The #20 Schubert BMW made it to 25 minutes from the end, only to succumb to overheating issues. The other four new BMW M4 GT3s crashed out due to driver errors and technical problems, resulting in a full-blown disaster for the Munich marque that had headed into the race as the favourite, in the 50th anniversary year for its famous M division. The best BMW M4 GT3 was a pro-am entry in 47th, and this was also delayed by an accident.

During qualifying, the octane126 Ferrari stole the show from the 'big four' German manufacturers with a flying lap by Luca Ludwig. Sadly, the Ferrari was forced to retire in the night after an accident caused by a tyre failure as a consequence of contact early in the race that dropped it far down the order. Then the TF Sport Aston Martin Vantage threatened to spoil the German party, taking the lead until 11pm, only for Nicki Thiim to crash out on his own. It was the Konrad Lamborghini in 10th that took the honour of being the best of the non-German marques, with the #706 Glickenhaus winning the SPX category in 12th overall.

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Drugovich does work to win with verve

FIA FORMULA 2
MONTE CARLO (MCO)
28-29 MAY
ROUND 5/14

FORMULA MOTORSPORT LTD

Felipe Drugovich won the feature race in Monaco

He's won three of the past four Formula 2 races and yet Felipe Drugovich has never been signed up by a Formula 1 team's junior academy. The Brazilian continues to independently go his own way at the top of the drivers' standings for MP Motorsport, and has already scored more points than he did in the whole of 2021 with Virtuosi.

A week on from Barcelona, where Drugovich became the first driver in F2's modern era to win both races in one weekend, he lined up on the feature race pole position for the second time this season — his previous pole was in Jeddah — ahead of ART Grand Prix-run title rival Theo Pourchaire. Liam Lawson was initially on pole, but the Carlin driver's lap was cancelled following the session when stewards ruled he had improved under the yellow flag caused by Drugovich's last-lap crash in Group A's qualifying session, which he was leading when he hit the barriers.

Drugovich got a clear start off the line, withstanding pressure from Pourchaire to extend his lead to three seconds in the first part of the race, before the action was neutralised by a safety car on lap 19 when Amaury Cordeel hit the barriers at Antony Noghes. Despite both having had slow pitstops and being held up at the pit exit by the stricken Van Amersfoort Racing car being wheeled back up the road, the pair resumed racing in the same order.

A second safety car on lap 23, after Clement Novalak found the wall at the Fairmont hairpin in the wake of contact with Lawson, looked set to present another chance for Pourchaire, but Drugovich held firm. Juri Vips (Hitech GP) closed in on the pair in the final laps, but Drugovich held on until the chequered flag. Pourchaire, who became F2's youngest ever winner here in 2021, settled for second, with Vips in third, having passed Virtuosi's fourth-placed Jack Doohan in the pits.

It represented a stark contrast from Drugovich's Saturday, where a first-lap puncture followed by a strategy mistake forced an early retirement. He was forced to pit after suffering contact in the opening-lap chaos, with his team taking a gamble and sending him back out on wet-weather tyres. But he pitted again just two laps later with no rain in sight, and received a five-second penalty for speeding in the pitlane. After appearing to retire, Drugovich returned to the track five laps behind the pack, before receiving another penalty for the same reason several laps later.

Hauger leads team-mate Daruvala through Casino

RED BULL

He finally retired on lap 19, capping a poor day for the team, with Novalak ending up in the barrier at the exit of La Rascasse on lap 10 following contact with Ayumu Iwasa. The DAMS driver received a 10-second penalty for the incident.

Reigning FIA Formula 3 champion Dennis Hauger took his maiden series victory in the sprint, claiming the lead off the line after polesitter Jake Hughes stalled, to beat Prema Racing team-mate Jehan Daruvala. With Hughes failing to move from the lights in his Van Amersfoort Racing-run car, Hauger made it past and held fast until the chequered flag, having built up a five-second lead over Daruvala, while Marcus Armstrong took third for Hitech.

Drugovich now sits 32 points clear of Pourchaire in the drivers' standings after four rounds of 14, with MP Motorsport leading ART by 29 points in the teams' championship.

MEGAN WHITE

WEEKEND WINNERS

FIA FORMULA 2
MONTE CARLO (MCO)
Race 1 Dennis Hauger
Prema Racing
Race 2 Felipe Drugovich
MP Motorsport

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VANDER LAAN / DUTCH PHOTO AGENCY

David led Beganovic in first race, before a reversal on Sunday morning

Ferrari, Alpine F1 juniors share Monaco spoils

FORMULA REGIONAL BY ALPINE
MONTE CARLO (MCO)
28-29 MAY
ROUND 3/10

Dino Beganovic and Hadrien David made it one-all for the respective Ferrari and Alpine junior programmes as Formula Regional by Alpine visited Monaco.

With a massive 37-car field split into two qualifying groups, the solo sessions decided the grid for both races. R-ace GP ace David topped the first group but, with the track rubbered in, Beganovic's Prema Powerteam machine went quicker on the other side of the entry. Beganovic was therefore awarded pole position for a race in front of almost empty grandstands early on Grand Prix Sunday, while David started first on Saturday.

The first race was ruined by an unnecessary red flag that ate up a large proportion of the 30-minute allocation. It was triggered when reigning French F4 champion Esteban Masson was tagged towards the pavement on the outside of the Loews hairpin by Sami Meguetounif, prompting a traffic jam behind. Quite clearly just a little bit of patience was needed while Masson executed a multiple-point turn to continue and free up the pack, which he did, by which time the race had been stopped.

David beat Beganovic after the restart by just under a second, while Van Amersfoort Racing's Kas Haverkort held off the ART Grand Prix car of Gabriele Mini for third.

The second race was hampered only by an early (and brief) safety car after Roman Bilinski and Maceo Capietto had both shunted on the first lap. Once the action got going again, Beganovic pulled out a clear lead, before David halved it to 2.1s in the closing laps. Mini was third under pressure from Haverkort, with Bortoleto and Belov next.

There was disaster for Monza race winner and Mercedes F1 junior Paul Aron. His suspension collapsed early in qualifying at Mirabeau, meaning he qualified for just one race, started at the back of the grid and finished 25th.

Perfect ten as Larry is suited, then boots it

PORSCHE SUPERCUP
MONTE CARLO (MCO)
29 MAY
ROUND 2/8

PORSCHE

Larry ten Voorde leads as Heinrich and Boccolacci duel ahead of Ste Devote

Reigning champion Larry ten Voorde was streets ahead as he claimed a second successive victory in Monaco.

The Dutchman's comfortable win from pole position lifted him to the top of the standings in place of Imola race winner Dylan Pereira, who finished fourth this time ahead of British Lechner Racing team-mate Harry King.

"It looked easy but it wasn't — I had to stay completely focused over the entire distance and try to drive as clean a line as possible," said GP Elite's ten Voorde, before heading off in search of a dinner suit for the official winner's gala. "I thought it might be a bad omen, so I didn't bring one."

Dorian Boccolacci went one place better than last year by finishing second, fending off 20-year-old Laurin Heinrich, who challenged on the run to Ste Devote after the start, only to think better of it. "I pulled alongside, but I would've had to drive on the dirty side of the track approaching the Casino and I didn't want to take that risk," said the Porsche junior driver, who was content to settle for third, albeit less than half a second in arrears.

Next stop, Silverstone as the Supercup gets fully into its summer stride on the Formula 1 support bill.

Nissan's new-generation Z zooms into the zone

SUPER GT
SUZUKA (JPN)
29 MAY
ROUND 3/8

New Nissan came back from Fuji shunt to win

Nissan pair Katsumasa Chiyo and Mitsunori Takaboshi scored a fairytale comeback Super GT win at Suzuka, delivering the marque a first victory for the new Z GT500.

The win came off the back of a huge crash last month at Fuji for the NDDP Racing machine, which had to be rebuilt around a new chassis and fitted with a fresh engine.

Chiyo was at the wheel for the opening stint, leaping from third on the grid into the lead on the first lap with aid from the superior warm-up of his Michelin tyres. From there, Chiyo and team-mate Takaboshi, who spent the night in hospital after his Fuji shunt, were more or less untouchable out front en route to a first GT500 win for both drivers, despite Takaboshi losing a lead of almost 20 seconds to a late safety car period.

It vaults the pair into a joint points lead with Rookie Racing Toyota duo Kenta Yamashita and Kazuya Oshima, who despite carrying 46kg of ballast finished eighth.

The battle for second was decided in the pits between two cars light on ballast, when the Real Racing Honda NSX-GT of Koudai Tsukakoshi and Nobuharu Matsushita jumped the TOM'S Toyota GR Supra of Sacha Fenestraz and Ritomo Miyata.

Two more Toyotas completed the top five, with the SARD machine leading home the Racing Project Bandoh car, which scored a second pole in succession but once again lost ground early on as it struggled to get its Yokohama tyres up to speed.

Nissan's flagship #23 NISMO entry suffered a nightmare weekend, qualifying down in 12th and then copping a drivethrough penalty when Tsugio Matsuda struck the back of a Lamborghini GT300 at Degner Curve, before finishing in the same position it started.

JAMIE KLEIN

motorsport.tv
Relive this race at Motorsport.tv

Hamlin goes the distance

NASCAR CUP SERIES
CHARLOTTE (USA)
29 MAY
ROUND 14/36

Denny Hamlin escaped with the lead in the first overtime period and the win in the second to claim a marathon Coca-Cola 600 at Charlotte Motor Speedway.

Hamlin's improbable win came in a race that lasted five and a quarter hours, and covered 413 laps or 619.5 miles, making it the longest race in distance in NASCAR history.

Although he started from pole position, Hamlin struggled with performance on his Toyota much of the race and got caught up in a wreck midway through. But as the caution-filled race wound to a close, the field went four-wide off Turn 4 on the opening lap of the first overtime, and Hamlin scooted by with the lead as a seven-car wreck erupted behind him.

That meant he led starting the second overtime period, only for Hamlin's Joe Gibbs Racing team-mate Kyle Busch to briefly hit the front before Hamlin stormed past on the final lap. He held off Busch by 0.119 seconds to claim the win – his first at Charlotte and the 48th of his Cup career.

"It's so special, the last big one not on my resumé, so it means so much," Hamlin said. "Man, we weren't very good all day. Just got ourselves in the right place at the right time. What a battle."

JIM UTTER

WEEKEND WINNERS

FORMULA REGIONAL BY ALPINE
MONTE CARLO (MCO)
Race 1 Hadrien David
R-ace GP
Race 2 Dino Beganovic
Prema Racing

PORSCHE SUPERCUP
MONTE CARLO (MCO)
Larry ten Voorde
GP Elite

SUPER GT
SUZUKA (JPN)
Katsumasa Chiyo/Mitsunori Takaboshi
NDDP Racing (Nissan Z GT500)

NASCAR CUP SERIES
CHARLOTTE (USA)
Denny Hamlin
Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota Camry)

S5000
SYDNEY MOTORSPORT PARK (AUS)
Heat 1 Joey Mawson
Team BRM
Heat 2 Cooper Webster
Versa Motorsport
Final Aaron Cameron
Garry Rogers Motorsport

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Bagnaia turns on the power for Ducati win

MOTOGP
MUGELLO (ITA)
28-29 MAY
ROUND 8/20

Bagnaia leads Quartararo and Marini on the way to another Ducati home win

Ducati victory at Mugello is an expected outcome in modern MotoGP, the Italian manufacturer having stormed to successive wins in 2017, 2018 and 2019. And with nine Ducatis on the grid for last Sunday's Italian Grand Prix, it was a case of which one would ascend to the top of the podium.

Few would have predicted the field to have been led by Gresini rookie Fabio Di Giannantonio, who snatched a shock pole position in a rain-affected qualifying, and the VR46 duo of fellow debutant Marco Bezzecchi and Luca Marini.

Di Giannantonio's lead lasted just three corners as Marini came through into Turn 4, with Bezzecchi competently taking over at the front from his team-mate at the start of lap two and staying there until the ninth tour. Di Giannantonio would drop down the order and finish 11th after a near dead heat with Aprilia's Maverick Vinales.

Eventual race winner Francesco Bagnaia found himself down in ninth on the opening lap having started fifth. The talk coming into Mugello was how the current technical regulations were having a major impact on riders' ability to overtake in races. Clearly Bagnaia didn't get the memo as he powered his way through to fifth on the third lap, using the GP22 Ducati's substantial grunt on Mugello's massive pitstraight.

Into Turn 1 on lap nine he ended Bezzecchi's run at the front of the pack and settled into his rhythm.

In the early stages of the 23-lap race, the key players not on Ducatis — chiefly Yamaha's points leader Fabio Quartararo and Aprilia's Aleix Espargaro — had their races dictated by how quickly they could clear the inexperienced trio of satellite Desmosedicis that qualified on the front row.

Quartararo ditched an aero upgrade that "disturbed" him throughout the weekend to find himself with a more useable Yamaha for the race. But he would have to box clever to overcome the M1's serious power disadvantage.

Getting what he described later as one of his best ever starts, Quartararo moved up a spot to fifth off the line and took fourth from Espargaro on the second lap. Making his moves where the Yamaha was strongest on the circuit allowed him to get tucked into the slipstream of the Ducatis ahead of him so he would not get left in their dust on the run into the first corner in the early stages.

He deployed this tactic to clear Di Giannantonio, Marini and Bezzecchi, but was powerless to stop Bagnaia coming through on him at the start of lap six.

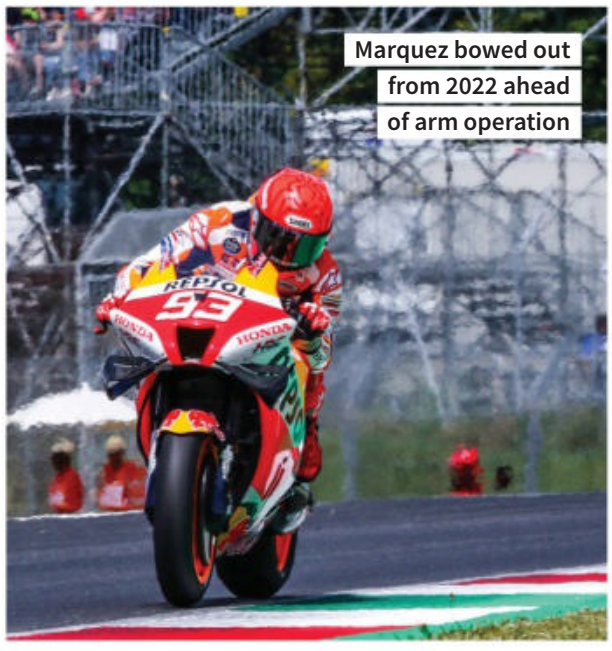
Espargaro was less fortunate in his assault on the podium places, the Aprilia rider admitting he "wasn't brilliant on overtaking" to clear Marini and Bezzecchi. Third, his fourth in a row, was the maximum on offer for him, though this was still a fine way to celebrate his new two-year Aprilia contract.

Quartararo's gap to leader Bagnaia fluctuated around the 0.8s-1.2s bracket, the Yamaha rider making gains through the flowing parts of the track only to have them nullified on the pitstraight. At the very least this put pressure on Bagnaia, who cracked two weeks earlier in France when battling with Gresini's Enea Bastianini — who crashed out of sixth place at Mugello on lap 14.

But Bagnaia wore no strains from his Le Mans mistake and ensured Quartararo had no quarter to attempt to steal Ducati's fourth home win in five starts. It has rebounded his title challenge, but Quartararo still extended his lead to eight points with a ride that once again proved his mettle as world champion, with Yamaha's next-best rider Darryn Binder just under 20s adrift in 16th.

Bezzecchi lost out on fourth to Pramac's Johann Zarco in the end, with Marini sixth,

Di Giannantonio took a surprise pole, but in the race dropped to 11th


Marquez bowed out from 2022 ahead of arm operation

ahead of KTM's Brad Binder and Takaaki Nakagami – the LCR rider drawing Alex Rins's ire after a collision. Rins's Suzuki team-mate Joan Mir crashed out on the same lap eight.

Rounding out the top 10 for the final occasion for the foreseeable future was Marc Marquez, the wounded six-time world champion calling time on his 2022 campaign to undergo a fourth operation on the right arm he badly broke back in 2020. Having held him back too much on the Honda and in his daily life, he – like everyone – hopes it is the final hurdle in his return to his dominant form of old.

LEWIS DUNCAN

NEXT REPORT

CATALUNYA GRAND PRIX
9 JUNE ISSUE

POWERED BY motorsport STATS

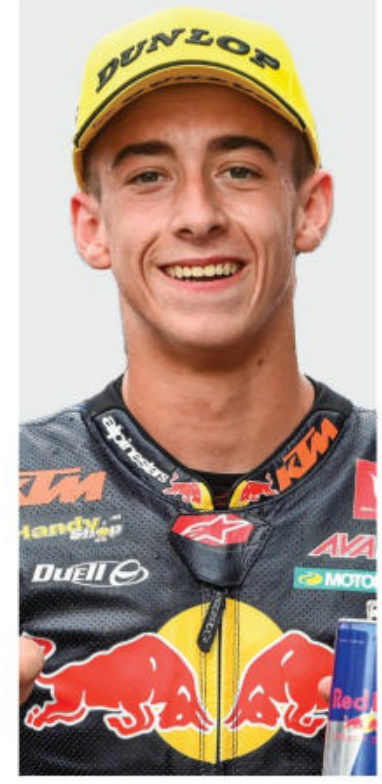
RESULTS ROUND 8/20, MUGELLO (ITA), 29 MAY (23 LAPS – 74.959 MILES)

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	**Francesco Bagnaia** (ITA)	Ducati	41m18.923s
2	**Fabio Quartararo** (FRA)	Yamaha	+0.635s
3	**Aleix Espargaro** (ESP)	Aprilia	+1.983s
4	**Johann Zarco** (FRA)	Pramac Ducati	+2.590s
5	**Marco Bezzecchi** (ITA)	VR46 Ducati	+3.067s
6	**Luca Marini** (ITA)	VR46 Ducati	+3.875s
7	**Brad Binder** (ZAF)	KTM	+4.067s
8	**Takaaki Nakagami** (JPN)	LCR Honda	+10.944s
9	**Miguel Oliveira** (PRT)	KTM	+11.256s
10	**Marc Marquez** (ESP)	Honda	+11.800s
11	**Fabio Di Giannantonio** (ITA)	Gresini Ducati	+12.916s
12	**Maverick Vinales** (ESP)	Aprilia	+12.917s
13	**Jorge Martin** (ESP)	Pramac Ducati	+17.240s
14	**Alex Marquez** (ESP)	LCR Honda	+17.568s
15	**Jack Miller** (AUS)	Ducati	+17.687s
16	**Darryn Binder** (ZAF)	RNF Yamaha	+20.265s
17	**Franco Morbidelli** (ITA)	Yamaha	+20.296s
18	**Michele Pirro** (ITA)	Ducati	+21.305s
19	**Remy Gardner** (AUS)	Tech3 KTM	+30.548s
20	**Andrea Dovizioso** (ITA)	RNF Yamaha	+31.011s
21	**Raul Fernandez** (ESP)	Tech3 KTM	+42.723s
22	**Lorenzo Savadori** (ITA)	Aprilia	-1 lap
R	**Enea Bastianini** (ITA)	Gresini Ducati	13 laps-accident
R	**Alex Rins** (ESP)	Suzuki	7 laps-accident
R	**Joan Mir** (ESP)	Suzuki	7 laps-accident
R	**Pol Espargaro** (ESP)	Honda	4 laps-accident

WEEKEND WINNERS

MOTO2
MUGELLO (ITA)
Pedro Acosta (below)
Ajo Motorsport (Kalex)

MOTO 3
MUGELLO (ITA)
Sergio Garcia
Aspar Team (Gas Gas)



Winner's average speed 108.858mph. **Fastest lap** **Bagnaia** 1m46.588, 110.075mph.

QUALIFYING 2 **1 Giannantonio 1m46.156s**; 2 **Bezzecchi** 1m46.244s; 3 **Marini** 1m46.327s; 4 **Zarco** 1m46.383s; 5 **Bagnaia** 1m46.471s; 6 **Quartararo** 1m46.506s; 7 **A Espargaro** 1m46.507s; 8 **Nakagami** 1m46.561s; 9 **P Espargaro** 1m46.667s; 10 **Bastianini** 1m46.679s; 11 **Martin** 1m47.223s; 12 **M Marquez** 1m47.468s.

QUALIFYING 1 **1 Giannantonio 1m47.219s**; 2 **M Marquez** 1m47.294s; 3 **Miller** 1m47.621s; 4 **Pirro** 1m48.209s; 5 **Oliveira** 1m48.231s; 6 **B Binder** 1m48.255s; 7 **Mir** 1m48.732s; 8 **A Marquez** 1m48.846s; 9 **Gardner** 1m48.907s; 10 **D Binder** 1m49.471s; 11 **Rins** 1m50.266s; 12 **Savadori** 1m50.277s; 13 **Morbidelli** 1m55.369s; 14 **Vinales** 1m56.479s; 15 **Fernandez** 1m57.106s; 16 **Dovizioso** 1m57.671s.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP **1 Quartararo 122**; 2 **A Espargaro** 114; 3 **Bastianini** 94; 4 **Bagnaia** 81; 5 **Zarco** 75; 6 **Rins** 69; 7 **B Binder** 65; 8 **Miller** 63; 9 **M Marquez** 60; 10 **Mir** 56; 11 **Oliveira** 50; 12 **P Espargaro** 40; 13 **Nakagami** 38; 14 **Vinales** 37; 15 **Martin** 31; 16 **Marini** 31; 17 **Bezzecchi** 30; 18 **A Marquez** 20; 19 **Morbidell** 19; 20 **Giannantonio** 8; 21 **Dovizioso** 8; 22 **D Binder** 6; 23 **Gardner** 3; 24 **Fernandez** 0; 25 **Pirro** 0; 26 **S Bradl** 0; 27 **Savadori** 0.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP **1 Ducati 181**; 2 **Yamaha** 122; 3 **Aprilia** 115; 4 **KTM** 93; 5 **Suzuki** 80; 6 **Honda** 75.

Bezzecchi (l) led early on until Bagnaia took control

GALLOWAY

A BRIGHT SPARK FINALLY MAKING HIS POINT

Jake Dennis raced and beat Charles Leclerc and George Russell before his 'first' single-seater career ran out of momentum. Now he's an established ace in Formula E

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

PHOTOGRAPHY motorsport IMAGES

A cursory glance at Jake Dennis's Instagram and Twitter profiles unveils an anxious world of travel-based nightmares involving numerous delays, luggage mishaps and missed train stops. Those misfortunes have earned Dennis a proxy following through the 'Jake Dennis Struggles' social media accounts, where his trials and tribulations are laid bare.

Those struggles also extend to the misuse of household appliances. On one occasion, Dennis slathered the insides of his dishwasher with washing-up liquid and ended up with an impromptu student union-grade foam party in his kitchen.

Luckily, Dennis is quite good at operating a car. He's emerged as one of Formula E's strongest drivers in his one and a half seasons in the championship, and has cemented his place in the all-electric championship after a few years off the single-seater radar in GT racing. It's been quite a circuitous road for Dennis to get back behind the wheel of a formula car but, on his return, he's been busy showing what the world was missing with the Andretti Autosport squad.

It's been a difficult second album so far for Dennis, but that's no slight on his skill behind the wheel; Andretti has simply not managed to find consistency, owing to struggles with its software. Qualifying performances have largely been impressive, but poor luck and a marginal lack of efficiency over its rival teams have contrived to stop the American squad from being frequent points scorers.

"It's been up and down," Dennis reflects on the opening rounds of the championship. "We started the season off great in Saudi with two top-five finishes, a podium and getting into the final of the [qualifying] duels. Then Mexico was a sort of slap around the face really, a reality check of how difficult Formula E can be. We expected to be quite quick, and we were probably one of the slowest teams. It's been a challenging time to try and get on top of that."

Few expected such a breakout maiden season when Dennis emerged in Formula E to partner Maximilian Guenther at the then-works BMW Andretti squad, given the challenge Formula E presents to rookies. You need only look at Antonio Giovinazzi's 2022 difficulties to see how tough FE is to crack.

Dennis endured the growing pains at the start of 2021, his first year in the championship. The Warwickshire native struggled to trouble the scorers in the opening pair of rounds at Diriyah and Rome, and entered the third round at Valencia's Circuit Ricardo Tormo with nothing on the board. There, his season turned around in a pair of races that were highly contentious thanks to the energy rules concerning safety cars. He secured a calm, collected and unexpected victory in the second race from pole, beating Andre Lotterer and Alex Lynn to his first win.

From there, Dennis's surprise assault on the championship blossomed. Back-to-back fifth places at Puebla and a couple more failures to score in New York preceded another victory at London's opening ExCeL race, which set Dennis up for a shot at the title at the Berlin finale. »

JAKE DENNIS CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- **2021** Third in Formula E with two wins (BMW Andretti)
- **2019** Sixth in Blancpain GT Endurance Cup (R-Motorsport Aston Martin)
- **2018** Race winner in Blancpain GT Endurance Cup (R-Motorsport Aston Martin)
- **2017** Blancpain GT podiums (WRT Audi)
- **2016** Fourth in GP3 with two wins (Arden)
- **2015** Third in European F3 with six wins (Prema)
- **2012** Formula Renault NEC champion (Fortec) and McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner
- **2011** InterSteps champion (Fortec)

Dennis has led the line at Andretti this year as Askew learns the ropes

There, it all quite literally came to a shuddering halt when his rear axle jammed under braking at the start of the third lap.

Andretti therefore did everything it could to extricate Dennis from his BMW deal and bring him into the fold for a second season. He's taken more responsibility within the team while Andretti brought in multiple new personnel — including rookie team-mate Oliver Askew — over the off-season as BMW departed.

"I had a bit more of a leading role of just trying to guide people, especially like Oliver, in the right direction of the systems and software," says the 2012 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner. "Thankfully, my data engineer from last year has stayed with me, which is super-important. He's probably one of the key guys in the team.

"On Oliver's side, there's a lot to learn. He's got three new people around in learning the software themselves, so it's a bit more challenging. But I don't think we can use it as an excuse. We arrived in Saudi competitive straight away and just need to try and keep progressing on that and keep moving forward.

THE GOOD Superb Valencia win was first of two victories in his rookie campaign…

S BLOXHAM

"My side is obviously more experienced. And that's probably why Oliver is following more of my set-up and my direction of where I want my car, which is completely understandable. I was very much the same with Max until I started to understand exactly what I wanted from the car. At one point he will get fully up to speed with it and work out what he likes, then he'll start to go in his own direction. He's done a good job so far."

THE BAD …but car failure robbed him of FE title shot

GALLOWAY

Dennis's rise from rookie to team leader in Formula E is even more impressive when you consider that the former Racing Steps Foundation-backed driver hadn't raced in single-seater machinery since 2017, his final part-season of Formula 3.

Across his F3 career, Dennis beat the likes of Charles Leclerc, George Russell and Alexander Albon — all bound for Formula 1 — but was largely forgotten about despite his stellar results in the junior categories. He also beat some stern competition in his sole GP3 season, reigning Formula E champion Nyck de Vries among them, but struggled to find further opportunities on the ladder to F1.

That, Dennis says, prompted him to forge his own path, knowing that it would be difficult to find chances in F1 without the weight of a junior programme behind him — and with his height.

"I think my sponsors probably could have done a year or two in GP2 or F2," Dennis recalls. "But I got to the point where I was like, I need to start earning money. I'm quite tall, and I just didn't really see myself as getting an opportunity in Formula 1. Even if I went in and won the championship, I think at that stage of everyone's career, you really need a junior programme behind you, which I wasn't on.

"So I was just like, 'Let's make the switch to sportscars'. My sponsors were happy to do that. I look back and I think it was a great decision, because I think I would have just spent two years in F2 trying to win it. It would have probably just been a waste of £4million for everyone's sake and two years of my career, where I could have been earning. I've had a great career in sportscars."

From there, Dennis began to follow the path to become a professional driver in the field of GT racing. That led to a berth with R-Motorsport, which then offered him a chance to experience another new discipline since it was due to hook up with HWA for its upcoming 2019 DTM project with an Aston Martin Vantage. Dennis was brought into the fold to pilot one of its four cars, but the project came and went after just a season with barely a whimper, as poor results had led Aston to put a pin in its backing.

"The GT project was highly efficient, well run, a very good project," says the 26-year-old. "The balance of performance we had was not great, so it was difficult to be able to get results, but we still had pole positions and we still had wins [in the 2018 Blancpain GT Series]. It wasn't bad, but it was challenging.

"HWA are a great foundation of DTM. But the chemistry between R-Motorsport and HWA was difficult. We had a very challenging year in DTM, with reliability and general performance with the car and the engine, so it was always going to be hard work. Unfortunately, the project folded after just one year, and then COVID hit at the same time. I was sort of a spare part in 2020."

TRIENITZ

THE GOOD Switch to GT racing was an inspired move for Dennis...

FERDI KRÄLING MOTORSPORT BILD GMBH

THE BAD ...although the DTM proved tougher with R-Motorsport Aston

Dennis was therefore left with minimal employment as the COVID-19 pandemic grabbed the world in a headlock. Thankfully, his simulator role at Red Bull, a role Dennis has held since 2018, kept him ticking along while racing opportunities appeared at a premium. On non-Formula E weekends, he performs race support to Red Bull's F1 squad and has moved to Milton Keynes to be close to the team's facility on the south side of the newly minted city.

"Red Bull kept me occupied," Dennis reflects. "I think it was a year where they just rammed in like 16 races in four months, so I was at Red Bull basically every weekend, all week just doing race support for those guys; I think I did all but one race for them.

"I moved to Milton Keynes through COVID so I was super-close to the factory. And I just wanted to move away out of my family's home and kept myself occupied with that, but it was very much twiddling my thumbs wanting to race, but I was contracted around R-Motorsport. I couldn't race, but I was still getting paid. But I was bored at home playing on my PlayStation, playing *Call of Duty*, driving the F1 sim, which was good and keeping me occupied that way. But, you know, everyone was still racing, to a certain extent. It was a tough time, for sure."

Then, the Formula E chance came around. With Alexander Sims leaving the BMW Andretti squad to move to Mahindra, BMW threw together a shootout to determine the identity of its next driver. Dennis came in as an outsider; the other drivers all had lengthy histories with BMW across DTM and GT racing, while Dennis had very little. The likes of Lucas Auer, Philipp Eng and Joel Eriksson were all in the mix for the drive, but it came down to a duel between Dennis and Sheldon van der Linde, with current Aston Martin F1 team principal Mike Krack in charge of making the call.

"RED BULL KEPT ME OCCUPIED. I WAS THERE BASICALLY EVERY WEEKEND DOING RACE SUPPORT FOR THOSE GUYS"

"I think having some junior single-seater experience prior to my sportscar career helped me," Dennis explains. "But what really didn't help me was that everyone else was a BMW driver already, and I was an Aston Martin driver.

"So politically, it was a difficult decision for BMW to make. But, you know, thanks to Mike Krack, he said, 'We're going to put the fastest guy in the car.' And that was that. So big shout out to Mike for really going against all the political stuff and just putting me in, and obviously I did the job in the end, but it was a difficult decision for him and a lot of pressure for me to deliver."

It's not been the easiest second season for Dennis, especially as the 2022 field is so tight at the front. But with a new Porsche powertrain contract, Andretti looks to be in a good place for the start of the Gen3 era — and, if it can retain Dennis for a third season, it has a proven frontrunner on the books. Whether he can simply avoid any further travel struggles will be another matter entirely...

FIA F3

RSF-backed Dennis was a frontrunner in European F3 in 2015

MAUGER

Having a laugh with GP3 rival Leclerc in 2016

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SAT 25/SUN 26 JUNE	SNETTERTON	BRITISH GT AND GB3 CHAMPIONSHIPS
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SAT 16/SUN 17 JULY	SNETTERTON	SNETTERTON HISTORIC 200
FRI 22 - SUN 24 JULY	BRANDS HATCH	BENNETTS BRITISH SUPERBIKE CHAMPIONSHIP
FRI 29 - SUN 31 JULY	OULTON PARK	OULTON PARK GOLD CUP
SUN 7 AUGUST	BRANDS HATCH	MINI FESTIVAL
SAT 13/SUN 14 AUGUST	SNETTERTON	KWIK FIT BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP
SUN 14 AUGUST	BRANDS HATCH	FESTIVAL ITALIA
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Gerry Marshall Trophy series created for Group 1 racers

HRDC

Goodwood holds races for Group 1 tin-tops of the 1970s and 1980s but only once a year

MOTORSPORT IMAGES

A new series called the Gerry Marshall Trophy has been launched by the Historic Racing Drivers Club to cater for pre-1983 Group 1 Touring Cars. It is due to hold its inaugural race at Snetterton on 19 June, with 25 entries already confirmed and more expected.

"Over the years when Goodwood has been running Group 1 for the Members' Meeting I've had people come to me and say it's great, they think it's fantastic, but it's only once a year," said HRDC founder Julius Thurgood, who intends to have at least three rounds next year.

"People don't want to build a car for once a year, they want to build it for a regular basis. If I was going to do anything with Group 1, I wanted to make sure Gerry's name was looked after and kept going. I want to build an accessible series that does what it says on the tin."

The series will be supported by Jim Morris, managing director of Old Hall Performance and Lifeline Fire & Safety Systems, while Marshall's son Gregor has been made ambassador.

"When Julius and Jim approached me with the idea of the series, how could I say no?" said Marshall. "The idea of a full grid of Group 1/1.5 Touring Cars, in traditional period decals and traditional British Saloon Car Championship class structure, with 45-minute, one or two-driver races, at some of Britain's most iconic circuits that dad loved, with like-minded individuals – fantastic stuff.

"Julius was a long-time friend and supporter of dad and I know how much he enjoyed the camaraderie of the old Top Hat series and, after experiencing HRDC events for myself last year, I know Julius will have everything well-oiled, with great racing. It was absolutely key to me that what we are all trying to achieve is the same thing. Personally, keeping dad's name going, but also ensuring all can enter at an affordable cost and not to detract from any other series or championships already out there."

STEFAN MACKLEY

Ex-Soper Sierra XR4Ti for sale after restoration

HISTORIC TOURING CARS

One of only two ex-Eggenberger Group A Ford Sierra XR4Ti cars has been put up for sale after undergoing a full restoration.

Rare car has been restored over the past four years

CNC AWS

This particular chassis was driven by Steve Soper and Klaus Niedzwiedz to victory at Estoril in the 1986 European Touring Car Championship, as well as finishing seventh in that year's Spa 24 Hours. It was shipped to New Zealand for Soper and Neville Crichton to race in the Wellington Street Race, where it finished fourth.

Crichton acquired the car, taking it to race in the Australian Touring Car Championship, where it was upgraded to full RS500 specification. It was later owned by Mark Petch before it went to the UK.

Its restoration, completed by CNC Motorsport AWS, has included the refitting of many original parts. The machine will be sold complete with FIA HTP papers and will be eligible for events throughout the UK and Europe.

"This is possibly one of the most significant cars of the Group A touring car era," said Alan Strachan, who has restored the car over the past four years. "Without the Merkurs [the American name for the car], the Sierra Cosworths may not have endured the success they did.

"This is a fascinating car, driven by some of the biggest names of the time and comes with an extensive history of its time in New Zealand, including pictures, race reports and period spare body panels. We also can offer an additional spares package and support with running the car."

A BLAST FROM FORMULA 1'S PAST

Calum Lockie and Geoff Page were in action at Brands Hatch last week at the wheel of two special Formula 1 machines. The pair of Toleman TG183s were previously driven by Ayrton Senna during the 1984 season, when the Brazilian made his debut in F1. The cars were being put through their paces ahead of appearing at the Goodwood Festival of Speed later this month. **Photograph by Gary Hawkins**

IndyCar stars to race at the Revival

GOODWOOD

Franchitti raced at the Revival in 2019, his first since the Houston shunt

J BLOXHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Four icons from the world of IndyCar and NASCAR including Scott Dixon, Helio Castroneves, Dario Franchitti and Jimmie Johnson will attend this year's Goodwood Revival meeting.

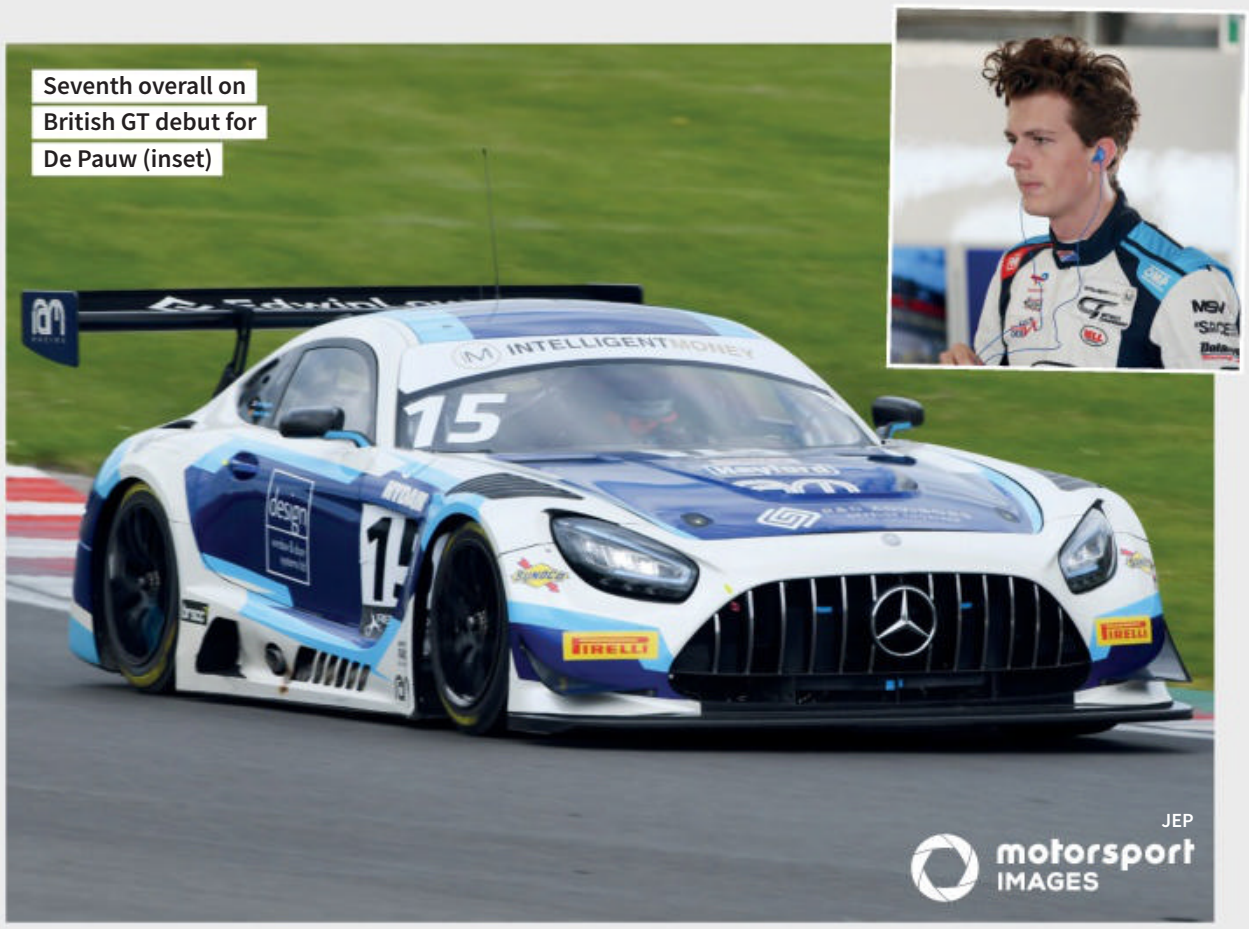
Dixon, Castroneves and Johnson will compete in the event, due to be held on 16-18 September, for the first time, while it will be a return for Franchitti, who raced in 2019 aboard a Ferrari 250 GT SWB/C and an AC Cobra.

The quartet will race in the two-part saloon car St Mary's Trophy for VIPs and owners, as well as the blue-riband Royal Automobile Club TT on Sunday afternoon.

Castroneves is the joint-record holder for most victories at the Indianapolis 500 with four (2001, 2002, 2009, 2021), while Dixon has one to his name (2008) and six IndyCar titles. Franchitti, who retired from full-time racing in 2013 after a horrific crash at Houston, has three Indy 500 victories and four IndyCar titles. Johnson crashed out on his debut in the Indy 500 last weekend, but racked up seven NASCAR Cup Series crowns during a 10-year period.

The Duke of Richmond said: "It's a privilege to be joined by some of the most renowned and successful IndyCar drivers at this year's Revival. I am so delighted that Helio, Scott, Dario and Jimmie will be joining us this autumn and we are all looking forward to the incredible spectacle these legends of motorsport will bring to the event."

Details about what cars the quartet will drive will be announced soon.



Seventh overall on British GT debut for De Pauw (inset)

De Pauw eager to complete British GT season with RAM

BRITISH GT

Ex-British Formula 3 race winner Ulysse De Pauw is intent on staying with RAM Racing for the remainder of the British GT season after a promising debut last weekend at Donington Park.

The Belgian, a race winner already in GT World Challenge Europe this season with the AF Corse Ferrari team, replaced Jamie Caroline alongside John Ferguson in the second RAM Mercedes-AMG GT3 at Donington, finishing seventh overall and second in Silver-Am.

"It's a one-race deal at the moment, but I'm hoping I can finish the season – that's the goal," said De Pauw, who drove the car for the first time in Thursday practice.

De Pauw said that his working relationship with amateur driver Ferguson has started on the right foot, and would be a key factor to the deal manifesting to a full season. "It's a big change but it feels very nice," he added. "It's a great opportunity and a different experience to work with a bronze driver, which I was not used to but it's gone really well. I tried to learn the car as quickly as possible, and then teach things to the team and John."

DAN MASON

Podium on debut for Valour Racing

GB4

Race-winning Radical and GT team Valour Racing was a late addition to the GB4 Championship grid at Donington Park last weekend and impressed with a debut podium finish.

The Corby-based team collected two Tatuus F4-T014 cars only three days before taking part in pre-event testing, but immediately was able to put in competitive lap times.

Daryl DeLeon, who has raced in the Radical SR1 Cup with the team this year, finished third in race one, while 2020 Britcar Endurance champion Danny Harrison scored a best result of seventh in the second race on his debut weekend in single-seater racing.

"It's gone very well, we wanted to try and be straight on the pace," said team manager Rhys Terry, who says the team is likely to make more GB4 appearances this season. "We picked the cars up on Monday morning, and had a late one on Wednesday night, but it looks like it paid off.

"It's a good package, being on the British GT package is good from a team point of view. In terms of drivers being on the ladder, it's somewhere different to be because you can see the progression from GB4 to GB3. My background has always been single-seaters, so wanting to bring that across to Valour has been one of the main goals."

STEVE WHITFIELD

IN THE HEADLINES

SMITH BAGS TROPHY

Graeme Smith's class-winning run in the CNC Heads Sports/Saloon Championship at Oulton Park last Saturday earned him the Dave Simpson Memorial Trophy. Smith's Mazda MX-5 won Class F, for modified cars of under 1600cc, by more than a lap from Helen Allen's Ford Fiesta. As the most dominant class winner, he was rewarded with the trophy in recognition of one of the founders of the long-running championship.

OULTON RACE CANCELLED

The second Pre-'83 and Pre-'93 Touring Cars race at Oulton Park last Saturday had to be cancelled due to timetable delays following an accident for Pre-'66 Touring Car racer Roger Stanford in the preceding race. Stanford, whose Lotus Cortina rolled after hitting the barriers, was taken to hospital with suspected broken ribs. The cancelled race is likely to be rescheduled at a future event.

LEMMER TAKES TO FALCON

Barwell Motorsport boss Mark Lemmer made a return to historic racing at Brands Hatch last Sunday, racing a Ford Falcon with Marco Attard in the Pre-'66 Touring Cars. It was a last-minute deal, with Lemmer travelling down to Kent from testing at Donington Park. He and Attard were 26th overall, after losing places due to a penalty for taking their mandatory pitstop too early. Lemmer found the car to his liking and may race it again later this year.

LATE CALL-UP FOR BARNES

Jon Barnes, the 2008 British GT champion and ex-Formula Palmer Audi driver, was called up at short notice as a race engineer on the Speedworks Toyota Supra GR GT4 last weekend at Donington Park. The car (below), driven by Tom Edgar and Jordan Collard, started fifth in GT4 for the three-hour race but finished on the final step of the rostrum. "Tired, emotional, but bloody hell it's satisfying when you get a result," said Barnes.

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

New European drag record for Ericsson

SANTA POD

No one could get near Ericsson as he dominated at Santa Pod last weekend

SCOTT GAY/SANTA POD

The FIA European Drag Racing Championship returned to Santa Pod after a two-year COVID-19 hiatus, which was again combined with round two of the Motorsport UK British Drag Racing Championship.

Extensive customs carnet demands imposed by the Swedish government reduced the usual heavyweight influx of Pro Mod Swedes to a single entrant. But just as his namesake and fellow Swede Marcus Ericsson was making a mark at the Indianapolis 500, Jan Ericsson was doing the same in the UK.

The Swede had switched from Pro Stock to Pro Mod as recently as 2017, running a Finnish-built, supercharged, methanol-burning Camaro. The 2019 champion faced 15 drivers from Britain and five other nations.

Britain's Nick Davies, Andy Robinson and 2021 Motorsport UK champion Kevin Slyfield led with 5.9s runs after Friday's two qualifying sessions. The rest stuttered, plagued by tyre shake and mechanical maladies. The Ericsson team slipped into gear on Saturday, though, and British hopes were soon dashed.

Runs of 5.7s are a rarity, but Ericsson unleashed six in succession, two on Saturday to secure pole and four more to trounce his opponents in Sunday's elimination rounds. His Saturday 5.724s/250.45mph low qualifier smashed the European record.

Seven others achieved career-best performances over the weekend, only to be overshadowed by the Ericsson rout.

Estonia's Andres Arnover and his turbo Mustang pipped Ericsson to the event's top speed, at 250.99mph, but fell victim to Dutchman David Vegter in the semi-final while Ericsson dispatched Swiss ace Bruno Bader in the other semi.

Vegter is Pro Mod's 'nearly man', with a record five FIA final-round defeats accumulated since 2009. Victory proved elusive at his sixth attempt too, as although he was 0.07s ahead of Ericsson out of the gate, his 5.909s/225.62mph proved no match for the Swedish juggernaut's 5.794s/246.89mph at the finish.

ROBIN JACKSON

Baptism of fire for Fenwick at Thruxton

GINETTA GT5

Fenwick took a best result of 10th

JEP

Mazda MX-5 frontrunner Fraser Fenwick stepped up to the Ginetta GT5 Challenge for a one-off outing at Thruxton last weekend with the AB Motorsport squad.

Fenwick, who has claimed five wins so far this year in the British Racing and Sports Car Club's championship for Mk1 models of the sportscar, made his Ginetta debut as the category joined the British Touring Car support bill.

Despite minimal prior experience of the car or track, Fenwick took a best result of 10th across the pair of races.

"We've only done one trackday in the car and been on the track once, so we've been thrown in at the deep end!" said Fenwick, who added the GT5 Challenge is "definitely one of the options for next year" if he can raise sufficient budget.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

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Cronin wins again in BRC on Jim Clark as Pryce excluded

BRC

Tyres proved to be the topic on everyone's lips at the Jim Clark Rally, but not all for the right reasons. A surprise shift from Hankook to Pirelli rubber on his Volkswagen Polo R5 proved to be a fruitful one for four-time British Rally champion Keith Cronin.

The Irishman was unbeatable over both days of the event, securing his first BRC victory since 2017 on the unforgiving Scottish Borders asphalt and with it the lead of the championship.

"It feels great, it's so nice to get a BRC win again," said Cronin. "Last year didn't go 100% to plan for us. So, it was encouraging to see the pace at Clacton and, after we started so well here, it was all about managing the lead."

Osian Pryce was Cronin's nearest challenger over Friday night's opening Longformacus test, stopping the clocks just seven seconds down after the first 11-miles. But on the second run in the dark, a puncture caused more than time loss for the round one winner.

With event regulations requiring an immediate stop to protect the road surface, Pryce's flat and subsequent drive to the end of the stage meant he was excluded.

James Williams, 36s behind, showed potential with runner-up spot in his Hyundai i20 as the fastest stage time on the last test demonstrated his intent.

Garry Pearson's home is just a few miles from the stages and the Duns driver put his local knowledge to good use, taking his Ford Fiesta Rally2 to the final podium spot.

Eamonn Kelly was a tour de force in the Junior BRC, taking a convincing win.

MATT COTTON

Mondello rallycross return for Evans

BRX

Christopher Evans, the 2006 British Rallycross champion, will return to the championship this weekend for the first time in more than a decade.

The 45-year-old Irishman will compete in a Pat Doran-owned Citroen C4 at Mondello Park, the first time the series has visited the motorsport venue since 2017.

"I've been talking about doing something for some time, I've wanted to do British Championship races for the last few years, the series is strong and it's exciting to be getting involved," said Evans, who hasn't raced a rallycross Supercar for over 12 years. "An opportunity came up to race at Mondello, so we've got something together to make a comeback.

"I'm really excited, but I'm also a little bit apprehensive. All of the drivers in the championship are quick, they've all been racing regularly for the last few years and now I'm jumping back into the middle of it. I've no idea how things will go — of course I'm doing the event to have a bit of fun, but going there just to have a bit of fun isn't really me either. I want to do well!"

IN THE HEADLINES

COYNE TO DEBUT MGF

Formula Ford legend Dave Coyne will pilot the ex-Warren Hughes MGF Cup car when it makes its MG Car Club Cockshoot Cup debut on the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit on 11-12 June. The two-time championship winning car has been restored by Mark Wright and Steve Elliott to its 1999 specification, when Hughes took it to the MGF Cup title a year after James Rhodes had claimed the inaugural crown.

STANZL'S 'MASSIVE STEP UP'

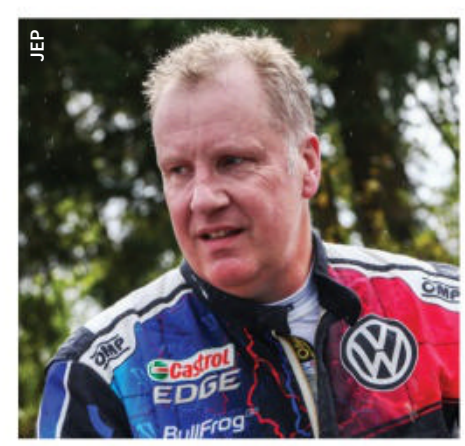
Historic Sports Car Club Formula Ford regular Danny Stanzl made his Masters debut at Brands Hatch at the wheel of a Ford Lotus Cortina in Sunday's hour-long Pre-'66 Touring Car race, but did not finish due to technical problems. Although he enjoyed the event, he described the level of competition as being "a massive step up" from Historic FF1600, and will race his Elden Mk8 for the rest of the year.

HYDE MAKING THE GRADE

Matthew Hyde secured two fighting fifth places in Formula Vee at Croft last weekend, having missed out on testing due to sitting a GCSE exam on Friday. The 16-year-old, whose racing career stalled when he was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes aged just 10, only made his car racing debut in April.

CO-DRIVERS GET TOGETHER

World champion co-drivers will come together for the McRae Rally Challenge at the Knockhill Circuit on 2-3 July. Derek Ringer, who guided Colin McRae to the World Rally Championship in 1995, and long-time co-driver Nicky Grist will both be there, as will Phil Mills (below) – co-driver to 2003 WRC champion Petter Solberg. Luis Moya (co-driver to Carlos Sainz Sr) and Tina Thorner will also be in attendance.



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The BTCC meetings feature some of the largest trackside crowds around but perhaps now is the time to reward them with an unusual series to add to the entertainment

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Thruxton is a fantastic place to watch motorsport — last weekend's British Touring Car meeting at the Hampshire speedbowl was yet another reminder of that. And the addition of the viewing area at the high-speed Noble corner, offering a panoramic overview of much of the circuit, from the Complex all the way up Woodham Hill and towards the Club chicane, means there is now yet another excellent vantage point for spectators to observe the slipstreaming action.

Yet, sadly, one of the categories making a guest appearance last weekend was down on numbers and — aside from Charles Clark's recovery from the back to a podium in race two — there was not all that much action for fans to view in the Porsche Sprint Challenge GB contests. Qualifying was the perfect demonstration of this, with the majority of the nine cars spending much of the half-hour session in the pits in order to preserve tyres, with just one actually taking the chequered flag.

It is a shame the category has yet to really reach its full potential, despite benefiting from featuring a proven Porsche product and having an attractive mix of race dates at both BTCC and British GT events, meaning drivers are racing in front a range of audiences and potential sponsors. The series for the 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport machines did not exactly have the easiest start to life with it being launched in 2020 amid all the coronavirus uncertainty, which then had a knock-on impact into 2021. It has subsequently struggled to build momentum this year, something that has been shown in stark contrast to the thriving sister Carrera Cup GB series — which, with a new car, has attracted some stunning grids (both in quality and quantity) already this year.

> **"The Mini Se7ens and Miglias provided great entertainment when they were on the bill"**

The situation at Thruxton was not helped by a number of the amateur drivers having clashing pre-existing commitments — be it business or family-related — and then the absence of the traditional Friday pre-event test day limited the potential for any newcomers to join for this round. And that is understandable, after all — if you are an amateur driver, you probably would not want your first experience of a new car to be in qualifying at the fastest circuit in the UK. "It was a perfect storm," admits Porsche GB motorsport manager James MacNaughton. "There's still a lot of interest in the championship and we're working very hard to improve the situation."

The disappointing grid then got Autosport thinking about some of the other guest series to appear at Thruxton over the years. For example, the Mini Se7ens and Miglias that provided wonderful entertainment at the venue back in 2019, when they secured a spot on the bill. And wouldn't it be great if more successful crowd-pleasing club categories got the chance to appear on the UK's biggest national motorsport stage?

Thinking back over time, there has been Historic Touring Cars in the 1990s, and Scottish Legends — alongside other north-of-the-border categories — have taken a number of slots at the Knockhill fixture over the years. There is no shortage of series that would be a fantastic guest addition to the bill, whether it be the Mini 7 Racing Club, or perhaps the National Legends Championship or the Classic Touring Car Racing Club and its plethora of tin-tops from days gone by.

Now, I recognise this is somewhat fanciful thinking. When it comes to the biggest motorsport show in town, money talks. The promoters of the five regular support series, understandably, are required to pay to appear at all 10 BTCC events regardless of how many they actually include on their calendars. And given all of the promoters have multiple series under their wings — with the exception of British Formula 4, which features at all 10 anyway — they have alternative categories to rotate when the established ones are having a weekend off. Thruxton last weekend was a great example of this as the Ginetta GT5 Challenge took the spot of the GT4 Supercup, the Mini Challenge Trophy was there in place of the faster JCW Mini machines and then the Sprint Challenge GB deputised for the Carrera Cup. In other words, there is not any room for anything a little left-field.

But that could change in the future. New British F4 organiser Motorsport UK has made no secret of the fact that it would it like to showcase the next generation of British single-seater talent at a Formula 1 race weekend and it has considered adding an overseas event to the schedule. Should this happen in the coming years, it could present the chance for something a little different to appear on the BTCC bill.

Thruxton was packed with spectators last weekend enjoying the spring sunshine — well, on Saturday at least! — and, as the premier circuit racing package in the country, it is important a stunning show is put on for those watching trackside, let alone those tuning in from home. Adding a bit of variety to the championships getting the chance to race in the spotlight, with a packed grid full of unusual cars, would be a great way of doing that.

P72 TOCA SUPPORTS REPORT

Tillbrook and Clutton surge to victory as Loggie leads points

DONINGTON PARK
BRITISH GT
28-29 MAY

Enduro Motorsport's Morgan Tillbrook and Marcus Clutton took a second British GT win in as many visits to Donington Park, as they won last weekend's three-hour race by almost a minute.

After a non-finish last time out at the Silverstone 500, Clutton admitted he was anxious heading to the East Midlands for the first of two visits this year. He immediately eased his nerves however, as the pair put their McLaren 720S on pole ahead of 2 Seas Motorsport's Lewis Williamson and James Cottingham.

Come the race it was the latter who made the better start, as Cottingham moved the Mercedes-AMG around the outside of Redgate to relegate Tillbrook into second.

The squabbling pair quickly pulled away from RAM Racing's Ian Loggie, but had their battle cut short by the only safety car of the race — called to clear up an excess of debris after numerous early incidents.

That neutralisation proved to be the decisive factor in Enduro's charge to the flag as Clutton was serviced and released just before the safety car came round, while Williamson was briefly stopped by a red light at pit exit and rejoined behind the safety car.

A wave-by shuffled the leading McLaren of Clutton back to the front and, with a buffer of GT4 cars between his nearest rivals, he soon disappeared into the distance.

"I think [the wave-by] was fair; at the time I was furious, but I think that was fair to do what they did and re-organise the pile," Clutton said.

"Having that clear track — there was one thing on my mind and that was a bit of a quali stint for an hour, well for the first 10 minutes until I caught traffic again and broke the pack."

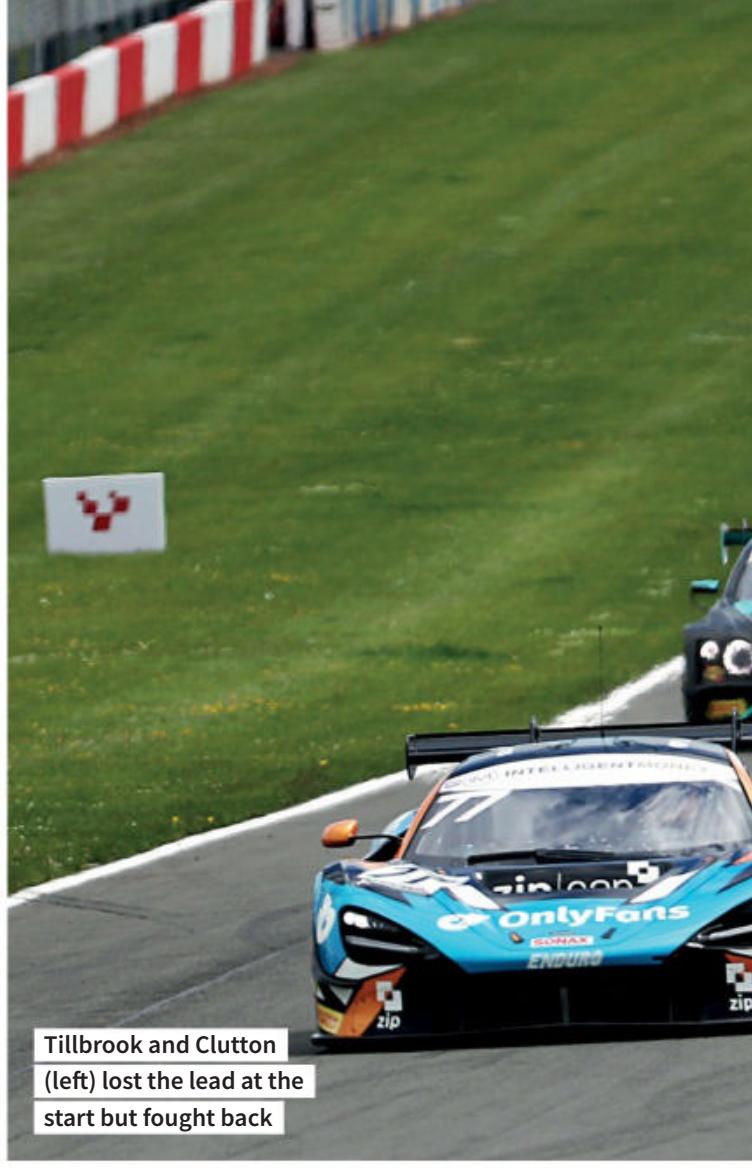
After a second Donington win to follow up their success in the 2021 finale, Clutton was quick to praise Tillbrook's development and added that victory had given him a 'reset' after a tough start to the season.

"Anyone who has not been watching British GT for the last two seasons when he wasn't there wouldn't realise he's only been doing it for just over one season," he said. "His pace is unbelievable, the way he adapts and responds to anything I give him, we've worked so hard giving him tuition and we're reaping the rewards now.

"I've had a bit of a tough time from Silverstone up to this event and I was bricking it up to this weekend, getting in the car dreading I was going to be off the pace again. I've not been quick, I've not performed well, but it's full reset this weekend."

2 Seas avenged its first-lap retirement at Silverstone with a lonely run to second, more than 20 seconds ahead of the rival Mercedes of Loggie and Callum Macleod.

Williamson conceded the team couldn't match the speed of the McLaren, adding: "The race was all about continuing the pace we had in qualifying. James did a



Tillbrook and Clutton (left) lost the lead at the start but fought back

Loggie leads the overall standings for RAM

Williamson/Cottingham finished in second

ACADEMY DUO PUT ON A MASTER CLASS

Academy Motorsport duo Marco Signoretti and Matt Cowley drove a faultless race at Donington Park to claim their first win of the season in the GT4 category.

It looked unlikely after Saturday, though, when the pair could only qualify fourth as Steller Motorsport pairing and championship leaders Richard Williams and Sennan Fielding came to the fore and bagged pole.

But just three laps into the three-hour contest, the narrative shifted dramatically as Williams rotated out of the lead at Old Hairpin after an unforced error. "It all went downhill from there," bemoaned Fielding, as the Oulton Park-winning pair fell back and eventually finished eighth in GT4.

With the Audi R8 out of contention, Academy seized upon the opportunity, knowing that the Newbridge Motorsport Aston Martin that won at Silverstone would be hit by a 20-second success penalty later in the race.

It was R Racing that was the initial beneficiary, Jamie Day leading a close battle that included Signoretti's Ford Mustang. Despite dropping behind Will Burns' Century BMW M4 early on, Academy assumed the lead following the safety car in the opening half hour, with Cowley holding Newbridge's Darren Turner at bay.

Turner piled on the pressure and finally sliced his way under the Mustang down the Craner Curves as Cowley braked to evade a faster GT3 BMW, but the Mustang driver was looking at the bigger picture.

"I knew Darren by then had the pace on me, but I was just making it difficult for him to get past me," said Cowley. "I knew it would help us in the long run. We raced our own race all the way through, had no warnings or track limits penalties and that saw us through."

Signoretti assumed a comfortable lead in the second half as pitstops cycled through, eventually claiming Academy's first GT4 win of

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: JEP
motorsport IMAGES

phenomenal job to qualify second so the main aim was to go forward but if we could maintain we would have been happy, too.

"We just didn't have the pace of Enduro. There was a couple of things we could have done better but ultimately that wouldn't have actually made the difference to be P1.

"James's pace was the same as the McLaren and when I was in it was about the same, so it was just about the pitstops really, getting that right, and traffic. Traffic was pretty crazy round here and OK you're racing your race, but you didn't want to ruin anyone else's race, too."

Heading into the third round of the year as joint championship leader, Loggie left Donington undisputedly on top after his faultless opening stint set the foundation for a third podium of the season.

7TSix's Mia Flewitt and Euan Hankey fell just 0.8s short of their first trophy of the year in fourth, having pitted a lap later than the majority of the GT3 field under the safety car, which vaulted them up to second.

Despite the car losing places in the middle hour, Hankey charged back — eventually prevailing in a captivating scrap with Redline Racing's James Dorlin with less than five minutes remaining to go fourth — but time spent behind the Lamborghini Huracan denied Hankey an opportunity to threaten Macleod's grip on third.

Fifth gave Dorlin and Alex Malykhin victory in the Silver-Am class, aided by class rival John Ferguson having a lairy spin after taking too much kerb on the inside of the Old Hairpin in his RAM Mercedes.

A bold strategy of making two of its three mandatory stops during the safety car paid off handsomely for WPI Motorsport, with Michael Igoe and Phil Keen finishing sixth in their Lamborghini and moving up to second in the standings.

JOE HUDSON

WEEKEND WINNERS

GT3

(117 laps) 1 Morgan Tillbrook/Marcus Clutton (McLaren 720S); 2 James Cottingham/Lewis Williamson (Mercedes-AMG GT3) +59.973s; 3 Ian Loggie/Callum Macleod (Mercedes); 4 Mia Flewitt/Euan Hankey (McLaren); 5 Alex Malykhin/James Dorlin (Lamborghini Huracan EVO); 6 Michael Igoe/Phil Keen (Lamborghini). **Fastest lap** Clutton 1m26.309s (103.74mph). **Pole** Tillbrook/Morgan. **Starters** 17.
Points 1 Loggie 65.5; 2 Igoe/Keen 50; 3 Shaun Balfe/Adam Carroll 49; 4 Malykhin/Dorlin 48; 5 Jules Gounon 43; 6 Tillbrook/Clutton 41.5.

GT4

(106 laps) 1 Marco Signoretti/Matt Cowley (Ford Mustang); 2 Will Burns/Jack Brown (BMW M4) +17.956s; 3 Tom Edgar/Jordan Collard (Toyota GR Supra); 4 Jamie Orton/Seb Hopkins (Porsche 718 Cayman RS CS); 5 Jamie Day/Josh Miller (Aston Martin Vantage); 6 Ross Wylie/Matthew Graham (Porsche).
FL Sennan Fielding (Audi R8 LMS) 1m34.898s (94.35mph). **P** Richard Williams/Fielding. **S** 13.
Points 1 Williams/Fielding 78.5; 2 Matt Topham/Darren Turner 74.5; 3 Signoretti/Cowley 69.5; 4 Burns/Brown 65; 5 Wylie 62; 6 Day/Miller 49.

Clutton (right) celebrates with Tillbrook after win

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

2022 by nearly 18s from the Century BMW of Burns and Jack Brown, having also kept out of trouble.

After surviving a bumper-removing clip from the second Century BMW, the Speedworks Toyota Supra charged through the field, Jordan Collard grabbing third with a neat cutback at the chicane on Josh Miller's Aston with 15 minutes remaining.

Miller and Day also fell to fifth behind Team Parker's Porsche Cayman, as Jamie Orton/Seb Hopkins recovered from a 10s stop/go penalty for a pit infringement. Turner and Matt Topham ultimately fell to seventh by the flag, but it was enough to claim the Pro-Am honours.

DAN MASON

Signoretti and Cowley came out on top in GT4

Esterson moved into title contention with a win and further podium

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: JEP

New winners blow GB3 title fight wide open

DONINGTON PARK
MSVR
28-29 MAY

The GB3 Championship battle intensified at Donington Park, as Joel Granfors and Luke Browning bounced back from a dramatic incident in race one to leave the weekend one point apart at the top of the standings.

For the second round in a row, all three races delivered first-time winners, with a strong performance from Max Esterson bringing the Douglas Motorsport driver into title contention. Granfors topped a close qualifying session to take pole for the opening contest, but the Fortec Motorsports driver's race lasted just half a lap.

JHR Developments' Matthew Rees tried to take the lead from the outside of the front row into Redgate, and having been run wide he made a second bid around the outside into McLeans. But contact put him in the gravel as Granfors speared across the track into retirement with damaged suspension. Browning was forced to take to the grass in avoidance, and became briefly airborne before colliding with the barriers. Rees was able to rejoin in eighth as a separate collision behind also put Carlin's Javier Sagrera and Arden's Nico Christodoulou — the latter making his GB3 debut — out with damage.

Callum Voisin profited to take the lead ahead of Roberto Faria, and the 16-year-old Ginetta Junior graduate controlled the remainder of the 12-lap encounter to head a Carlin 1-2 and record his first single-seater victory, with Esterson scoring his first series podium in third. Arden's Alex Connor was fourth ahead of Elite Motorsport duo Tom Lebbon and James Hedley.

Esterson started from pole for race two, which he duly converted into a lights-to-flag triumph, with his only threat coming on the opening lap. Voisin tried to drive around the outside at Old Hairpin, but ended up on the grass and tumbled to an eventual seventh.

Browning was second ahead of Granfors, having passed his rival at the start from sixth on the grid. Hedley survived an early excursion at the Fogarty Esses to claim fourth ahead of Faria.

Hitech GP claimed a second reverse-grid win in a row in the final encounter, with Bryce Aron repeating team-mate Cian Shields' triumph from the previous round. Aron led from start to finish from pole, with Branden Oxley coming home second after passing Fortec's Mikkel Grundtvig into Redgate on lap one. Tommy Smith also passed Grundtvig for third, but a 10s penalty for a jump start denied the Douglas driver the final podium spot.

Hampered by a throttle-linkage issue in qualifying, Elite's John Bennett salvaged fourth having been glued to the back of Grundtvig's car for most of the race. Zak Taylor finished fifth, but was excluded having been judged at fault when Arden's David Morales crashed out at Redgate.

Granfors climbed from the back of the 22-car grid — the largest in the history of the championship — to grab 10th and, despite finishing one place behind Browning, more points for positions gained enabled the Swede to leave the weekend with a slender advantage.

Marc Warren continued his unbeaten start to the Ginetta GT Academy season with a hat-trick of wins. The Raceway Motorsport driver led home Thomas Holland in Saturday's contest, and profited from a bad start for polesitter Leo Karavasili to win a disrupted race two before winning again in race three from Ravi Ramyead.

Max Hart did the double at the second round of TCR UK to extend his championship advantage. His closest challenger, Chris Smiley, led the opening

Warren continued his unbeaten run in the Ginetta GT Academy

WEEKEND WINNERS

GB3
Race 1 (all 12 laps) 1 Callum Voisin; 2 Roberto Faria +2.262s; 3 Max Esterson; 4 Alex Connor; 5 Tom Lebbon; 6 James Hedley. **Fastest lap** Esterson 1m23.543s (107.18mph). **Pole** Joel Granfors. **Starters** 22.
Race 2 1 Esterson; 2 Luke Browning +0.762s; 3 Granfors; 4 Hedley; 5 Faria; 6 Matthew Rees. **FL** Esterson 1m23.123s (107.72mph). **P** Esterson. **S** 22.
Race 3 1 Bryce Aron; 2 Branden Oxley +2.359s; 3 Mikkel Grundtvig; 4 John Bennett; 5 Tommy Smith; 6 Voisin. **FL** Faria 1m23.810s (106.84mph). **P** Aron. **S** 22.
Points 1 Granfors 168; 2 Browning 167; 3 Esterson 145; 4 Faria 143; 5 Voisin 132; 6 Lebbon 127.

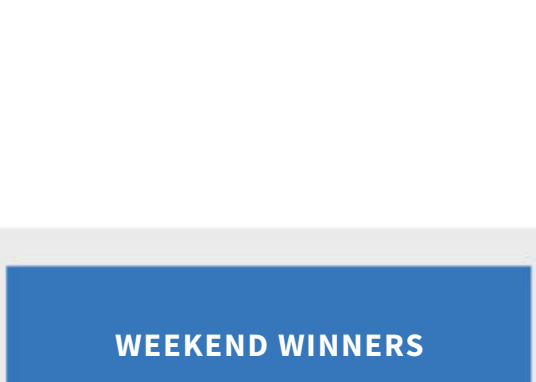
GB4
Race 1 Nikolas Taylor
Race 2 Megan Gilkes
Race 3 Logan Hannah

GINETTA GT ACADEMY
Races 1, 2 & 3 Marc Warren

TCR UK
Races 1 & 2 Max Hart (Hyundai i30 N TCR, below)

CCSC SLICKS SERIES
Morgan Short/Marcus Short (Mosler MT900R)

MODIFIED FORD SERIES
Races 1 & 2 Dave Cockell (Escort Cosworth)



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

lap from pole, but was fired off the road approaching McLeans by Adam Shepherd, who made a subsequent mistake at Redgate to allow Hart into the lead and to the win. Shepherd retired with car damage, while Bradley Kent climbed from ninth to second.

Hart's Hyundai stormed from 10th to win again in the part-reverse-grid race. He made up seven spots on the opening lap before swiftly dispatching Bradley Hutchinson and Ant Whorton-Eales following an early safety car period, with the Honda of Smiley finishing second.

Morgan and Marcus Short won the Classic Sports Car Club's Slicks Series race in a Mosler MT900R. Daniel Petters (Porsche 911) and David Foster (McLaren 570S) took advantage of backmarkers to move ahead after the mandatory pitstops but the Short brothers ultimately prevailed.

STEVE WHITFIELD

TAYLOR GRABS THE INITIATIVE

Nikolas Taylor moved to the top of the GB4 Championship standings with his fourth victory of 2022 in last Saturday's opener at Donington Park.

Formula Ford 1600 graduates Megan Gilkes and Logan Hannah shared the spoils in Sunday's two races, with Gilkes converting her first pole into her second victory of the season, and also taking the fastest lap of the weekend in the Hillspeed driver's strongest showing so far.

Gilkes narrowly missed out on a double pole in qualifying, with Taylor snatching the quickest time by 0.012 seconds late on.

Alex Walker moved ahead of Gilkes at the start of race one before challenging Taylor into Redgate. But the Elite Motorsport driver ran out of space on the exit, dropping to fourth behind Hillspeed duo Max Marzorati and Gilkes.

Fortec's Taylor initially pulled out a gap, but Marzorati showed strong pace in the race's second half to close in. Despite being tucked under the rear wing of Taylor on the final lap, Marzorati was unable to get by before the chequered flag.

Daryl DeLeon pounced on a battle between Walker and Kevin Mills Racing's Tom Mills to snatch third at the Melbourne Hairpin, scoring a podium in his and Valour Racing's first GB4 outing.

Walker ended up fifth behind Mills, conceding the championship initiative to Taylor in the process. Gilkes slipped back to seventh behind Walker's team-mate Jack Sherwood.

In race two, Sherwood pulled off some early overtakes into McLeans on Marzorati and Mills to take his second podium in third.

But it was Gilkes and Taylor, the latter having grabbed the lead off the line, who pulled clear of the rest after Walker stalled from second on the grid.

Gilkes eradicated Taylor's early advantage and then pounced when Taylor got sideways on a kerb at the Fogarty Esses, as Gilkes moved to front into the Melbourne Hairpin and came home almost 5s ahead. Marzorati finished fourth to take second in the standings away from Walker, who recovered to ninth.

"We're all thrilled with it," said Gilkes on her victory. "We came here knowing we had some pretty good pace, so it was about trying to capitalise on that."

Rossoverde Racing's Christian Lester lined up on pole for the full reversed-grid race, but he stalled at the start, allowing Graham Brunton Racing's Chloe Grant to lead into Redgate. Her team-mate Hannah moved past Fortec's Jessica Edgar into second, before taking the lead away from Grant down the Craner Curves.

Hannah pulled out a 2s second advantage while the battle raged for second. KMR's Jarrod Waberski and Sherwood both moved past Grant, before halving the gap to Hannah.

Sherwood snatched second at Coppice, but was unable to catch Hannah before the finish, with Waberski resisting late pressure from Marzorati to clinch third. Taylor climbed from 13th to sixth ahead of Walker and Gilkes.

STEVE WHITFIELD

Gilkes enjoyed her best weekend yet in GB4

TOCA SUPPORTS THRUXTON 28-29 MAY

Neate (l) just pipped team-mate Guinchard to race-two victory

Neately Dunne by F4 winners

BRITISH F4

It was just a matter of time before British Formula 4's new era produced a truly exciting race and, sure enough, Thruxton delivered with the partially reversed-grid middle contest being a thriller.

Polesitter Noah Lisle led in the early stages but the drivers on a charge were Argenti pair Daniel Guinchard and Aiden Neate. Mercedes junior Guinchard made a bad start and dropped to fourth, while Neate — who was penalised in race one for clashing with Louis Sharp when battling for a podium — started sixth.

The pair soon dispatched Georgi Dimitrov and began reeling in Lisle's 2.7-second lead at a rate of over half a second a lap. Sure enough, the inevitable happened on lap 14 of 17 when Guinchard made a fantastic move around the outside of the Complex and Neate also snuck ahead.

Neate then began pressuring his team-mate and pounced when Guinchard overcooked it into the Club chicane with two laps to go, taking a maiden win.

"I'm just over the moon!" said Neate. "The start was fantastic and I picked them off well and kept my head."

Guinchard, meanwhile, was left with a mix of emotions. "I'm pleased to get a podium but also gutted to miss out on the win," he said. "I think I needed it after a tough start to the season. I was trying to keep Aiden behind and just made a mistake."

Either side of that, it was domination for points leader Alex Dunne. The Irishman briefly lost out to Ugo Ugochukwu in the opener but the Carlin driver ran wide at the Complex on lap six and Dunne never looked back.

Ugochukwu got the better launch in the finale and jinked one way then the other to try to pass Dunne but succeeded in just tapping the Hitech car, delaying himself and allowing Dunne to scamper clear to a 7s win. He was initially concerned about a possible puncture after the contact but soon pulled clear to respond to his Brands Hatch race-three errors in the perfect way.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Successful weekend for Foster family

PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

While his younger brother picked up his latest Indy Pro 2000 win at Indianapolis Raceway Park, Harry Foster was busy adding more family success, taking his first victories in the Porsche Sprint Challenge GB at his local Thruxton track.

Foster made his car racing debut in a one-off Porsche Cayman outing at the end of last season before grabbing three podiums in this year's Silverstone opener. But he went better than that last weekend, taking two impressive wins.

It had looked like he was going to come under pressure from Matthew Armstrong in the opener until the Team Parker Racing driver outbraked himself into the Club chicane. "I thought he had got me at the start!" Foster admitted. "I'm very happy to take my first win after I had three thirds at Silverstone."

Foster had an even closer fight on his hands in the second contest as, this time, he had Steve Roberts all over him but the Redline racer could not find a way by.

Further back, much of the focus was on Charles Clark. The points leader had spun out of third in the opener when he dropped a wheel wide at Goodwood and was therefore starting at the back for the finale.

But he stormed through the order and grabbed a podium from guest driver Ben McLoughlin with a brave move at Church. "That was good fun!" he said. "Unfortunately, I didn't have enough time to catch the leaders."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Capozzoli stars in wild Mini races

MINI CHALLENGE TROPHY

It's appropriate that Mini Challenge Trophy contender Charlie Mann is the grandson of the bass player from Thruxton's local 1960s chart-toppers, Andover legends The Troggs. The competitors were once again the wild things of the BTCC support bill, with unruly driving and an inability to steer through the chicane their hallmark.

Louie Capozzoli's victory in race two was the highlight. He was challenging triple Pembrey winner Nelson King for the lead around the outside of the chicane when, in stark contrast to his peers, he actually bothered to stop for the second apex rather than charge blithely through the runoff. The lost momentum dropped him to fifth, while King took to the grass in what looked like a pre-emptive avoidance of Capozzoli.

Capozzoli charged back to win from Alfie Glenie, Lee Pearce and King, although Glenie and King were penalised two positions in the results for corner-cutting.

King had made it four in a row in an opener truncated by a lengthy safety car. He pulled off an excellent outside move on Capozzoli, who finished runner-up,

This dramatic crash for Luca Marinoni Osborne ended finale

with Matt Hammond third.

King was also the winner of the final race, which was twice red-flagged before results were declared after just one lap.

MARCUS SIMMONS

Frantic Thruxton Junior action

GINETTA JUNIOR

The Ginetta Junior action was typically frantic at Thruxton, with Josh Rowledge and Ian Aguilera sharing the spoils for R Racing.

The opener featured a brilliant battle between Rowledge and Elite Motorsport's Will Macintyre. The pair swapped places numerous times, including on the final lap when Macintyre grabbed the lead at Noble.

Macintyre (l) and Rowledge had great scrap in the opener

But, with his mirror dropping down at a crucial moment, he lost out to Rowledge at Club and was narrowly beaten to the flag.

Further back, Aguilera was causing chaos — and was eventually disqualified. His antics meant the lead pair had a huge advantage over third and fourth place finishers Aqil Alibhai and Harri Reynolds.

Aguilera's race-two win was not without incident, either, as he tangled with Liam McNeilly at the Complex before passing Alibhai for the lead, just prior to red flags being shown with Kanato Le's brakes on fire. Behind, it was five-abreast for third out of the Complex, Reynolds getting the place.

While Rowledge, Reynolds and Macintyre consolidated their position in the standings, it was a weekend to forget for Joe Warhurst. He was one of Aguilera's race-one victims, being spun at Club and was then collected hard by Elite team-mate Le, Warhurst's car being too damaged to contest race two.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Haughton unstoppable in GT5

GINETTA GT5 CHALLENGE

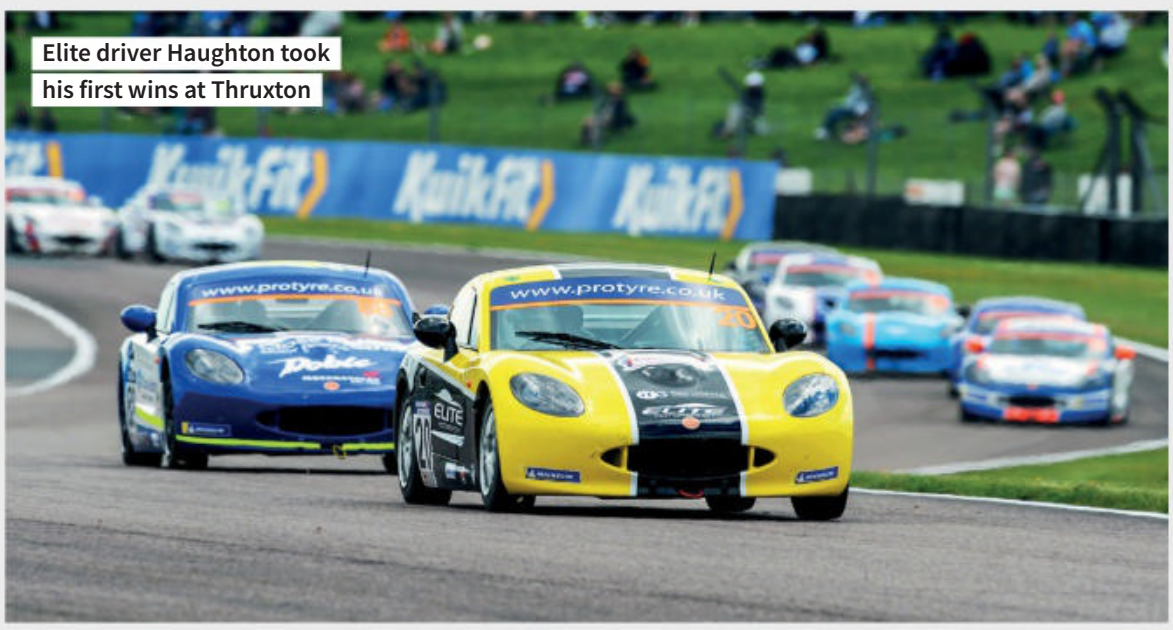
We may only be just over two months into the season but the Ginetta GT5 Challenge has already reached the mid-point of its campaign — and a hotly contested title race is developing after Harley Haughton became the fifth different driver to take a win this season.

Both races followed a similar pattern, as the Elite Motorsport driver passed early leader Connor Grady and then pulled clear. In the opener, that came on the inside of Club on lap three and, after that, a thrilling battle for second developed with six cars in the mix. Eventually, as Grady faded down the order, 'willpower' told with Will Orton and Will Jenkins completing the podium.

It took Haughton five laps to prise the lead from Grady in race two, this time thanks to the Xentek driver running slightly wide at Church. Grady did briefly lose second to Will Jenkins before cutting his way across the Club chicane to reclaim the place.

Next it was Nat Hodgkiss's turn to challenge but he sent Grady spinning into the Club barriers and was later disqualified from second, promoting Mikey Doble. But he finished some 11 seconds back from the dominant Haughton, who has now moved to second in the standings.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Elite driver Haughton took his first wins at Thruxton

RACE RESULTS

BRITISH FORMULA 4

Race 1 (all 17 laps) 1 Alex Dunne (above); 2 Ugo Ugochukwu +3.102s; 3 Oliver Gray; 4 Joseph Loake; 5 Georgi Dimitrov; 6 Eduardo Coseteng. **Fastest lap** Ugochukwu 1m11.171s (119.17mph). **Pole** Dunne. **Starters** 16.
Race 2 1 Aiden Neate; 2 Daniel Guinchard +0.258s; 3 Noah Lisle; 4 Gray; 5 Dunne; 6 Ugochukwu. **FL** Neate 1m11.377s (118.83mph). **P** Lisle. **S** 16.
Race 3 1 Dunne; 2 Ugochukwu +6.583s; 3 Louis Sharp; 4 Neate; 5 Guinchard; 6 Edward Pearson. **FL** Dunne 1m10.848s (119.72mph). **P** Dunne. **S** 16.
Points 1 Dunne 158; 2 Ugochukwu 119; 3 Gray 108; 4 Neate 73; 5 Loake 61; 6 Michael Shin 48.

PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

Race 1 (both 16 laps) 1 Harry Foster; 2 Matthew Armstrong +2.189s; 3 Steve Roberts; 4 Ben McLoughlin; 5 Toby Trice; 6 Carl Cavers. **FL** Charles Clark 1m17.337s (109.67mph). **P** Foster. **S** 9.
Race 2 1 Foster; 2 Roberts +0.682s; 3 Clark; 4 Armstrong; 5 McLoughlin; 6 Matt Greenwood. **FL** Clark 1m17.420s (109.55mph). **P** Foster. **S** 10.
Points 1 Clark 43; 2 Foster 39; 3 Armstrong 39; 4 Roberts 29; 5 Greenwood 20; 6 Trice 17.

MINI CHALLENGE TROPHY

Race 1 (11 laps) 1 Nelson King; 2 Louie Capozzoli +0.161s; 3 Matt Hammond; 4 Nicky Taylor; 5 Joe Wiggin; 6 Lee Pearce. **FL** Ben Jenkins 1m31.707s (92.48mph). **P** King. **S** 30.
Race 2 (13 laps) 1 Capozzoli; 2 Pearce +1.364s; 3 Alex Solley; 4 Alfie Glenie; 5 Charlie Mann; 6 King. **FL** Glenie 1m31.348s (92.84mph). **P** King. **S** 30.
Race 3 (1 lap) 1 King; 2 Mann +0.272s; 3 Solley; 4 Jack Byrne; 5 Taylor; 6 Capozzoli. **FL** King 1m40.106s (84.72mph). **P** Mann. **S** 29.
Points 1 King 263; 2 Capozzoli 210; 3 Taylor 206; 4 Pearce 204.5; 5 Solley 189; 6 Hammond 187.

GINETTA JUNIOR

Race 1 (12 laps) 1 Josh Rowledge; 2 William Macintyre +0.100s; 3 Aqil Alibhai; 4 Harri Reynolds; 5 Sonny Smith; 6 Luke Watts. **FL** Alibhai 1m30.607s (93.61mph). **P** Macintyre. **S** 24.
Race 2 (6 laps) 1 Ian Aguilera; 2 Alibhai +0.545s; 3 Reynolds; 4 Rowledge; 5 Zac Meakin; 6 Macintyre. **FL** Reynolds 1m31.149s (93.05mph). **P** Alibhai. **S** 23.
Points 1 Rowledge 223; 2 Reynolds 215; 3 Macintyre 197; 4 Alibhai 154; 5 Joe Warhurst 144; 6 Liam McNeilly 108.

GINETTA GT5 CHALLENGE

Race 1 (both 15 laps) 1 Harley Haughton; 2 Will Orton +5.650s; 3 Will Jenkins; 4 Nat Hodgkiss; 5 Connor Grady; 6 Mikey Doble. **FL** Haughton 1m23.558s (101.50mph). **P** Grady. **S** 21.
Race 2 1 Haughton; 2 Doble +11.251s; 3 Jenkins; 4 Orton; 5 Ruben Hage; 6 Aidan Hills. **FL** Hills 1m23.946s (101.03mph). **P** Grady. **S** 21.
Points 1 Jenkins 242; 2 Haughton 223; 3 Grady 212; 4 Orton 198; 5 Doble 198; 6 Hodgkiss 187.

Terrific Tordoff fights back to grab spoils

BRANDS HATCH
MSVR MASTERS HISTORIC
28-29 MAY

Multiple British Touring Car Championship race winner Sam Tordoff scored a popular victory in the Masters Pre-'66 Touring Car race around the Brands Hatch Grand Prix circuit last weekend.

At the wheel of a vivid magenta Ford Falcon, the 2016 BTCC runner-up had banked on building up a decent lead from pole position in order to accommodate a 20-second pro driver's penalty, but the safety car came out just before half-distance in the hour-long race, triggering a mass trip to the pits.

Alex Thistlethwayte and Craig Davies, both in Ford Mustangs, were elevated to the front with Thistlethwayte ahead, but Davies overhauled him as Tordoff steadily gained on them both and swept past for the win.

Alex Taylor's Mustang had challenged for the lead early on and was keeping pace with Thistlethwayte and Davies when a suspected head gasket failure sent it limping into retirement on the last lap.

Marcus Jewell and Ben Clucas were fourth in their Lotus Cortina, having seen off the Leo Voyazides/Simon Hadfield Ford Falcon. The Falcon was fifth on track, but Voyazides, who had not raced for more than two years, was penalised for causing a collision and dropped to seventh. This promoted leading Mini Cooper driver Nathan Heathcote to fifth. The Minis had a great slipstreaming contest early on, but Jeff Smith was unable to keep up with Heathcote due to the wrong tyre choice and Ian Curley retired late on with electrical problems.

Hadfield and Voyazides in the latter's Lola T70 won the Masters Sports Car Legends race in dominant style in a contest that was more about heroic individual performances than wheel-to-wheel sparring. Hadfield took the second stint in the one-hour contest and quickly hit the front, leapfrogging Chris Beighton's similar T70, which had been leading. He confessed that Voyazides had brought the car in and told him that the brakes were failing, so his strategy was to brake as little as possible.

A showdown between Hadfield and Tom Bradshaw never materialised, as although the Chevron B19 driver was phenomenally quick at the start and had built up a sizeable lead, he retired suddenly on lap 12 with ominous examinations being made at the back of the car.

Miles Griffiths won on his debut in the Masters Racing Legends race on Saturday, nosing his Fittipaldi F5A past Steve Hartley's McLaren MP4/1 off the line. Hartley finally reclaimed top spot on lap 10, but a sudden electrical failure dropped him out of the race and gave the win to Griffiths. Hartley got his revenge in race two, reeling in Griffiths even after the Fittipaldi had built up a big lead and passing him with six minutes to go.

The opening Masters Endurance Legends looked to be somewhat processional initially, as Stuart Wiltshire overtook Steve Tandy's Peugeot 90X for the lead in his LMP2 Ligier, but the race was turned on its head when the pair collided on lap six of 26 at Paddock Hill Bend. Wiltshire escaped unscathed but Tandy's race ended in the gravel.

Wiltshire was then caught during the pitstops by the Lola of Steve Brooks/Martin O'Connell and Mike Newton's MG-Lola LMP2. Brooks, who described driving the Lola as "harder than flying a Spitfire", and O'Connell were the eventual winners. Tandy won race two from the back after a contact-free battle with Wiltshire.

Equipe GTS attracted a 46-car field, and the 40-minute race provided plenty of action at the front. Christian Douglas was the eventual winner, emerging from seventh place in his TVR Griffith.

Dough Muirhead's Healey 100/6 started from pole but was soon challenged by Alex Causer in a Lotus Eleven. Causer continued to attack until an 18th-lap accident at the back of the circuit led to retirement. Bruce White's Lotus Elan was second, having enjoyed an early exchange with John Tordoff's similar machine, the latter eventually finishing sixth.

Third went to Robin Ellis in an Elan 26R, having made his way through from the back row of the grid after a crash in qualifying. Muirhead held on for fourth and regular Equipe race-winner Tom Smith was fifth in his MGB Roadster.

RACHEL HARRIS-GARDINER

Lola T70 of Voyazides and Hadfield came out on top in Sports Car Legends

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: GARY HAWKINS

Ford Falcon of Tordoff led at the start but had to recover after pitstops

WEEKEND WINNERS

MASTERS PRE-'66 TOURING CARS
Sam Tordoff (Ford Falcon Sprint)

MASTERS SPORTS CAR LEGENDS
Leo Voyazides/Simon Hadfield (Lola T70 Mk3B)

MASTERS RACING LEGENDS
Race 1 Miles Griffiths (Fittipaldi F5A)
Race 2 Steve Hartley (McLaren MP4/1, below)

MASTERS ENDURANCE LEGENDS
Race 1 Martin O'Connell/Steve Brooks (Lola B12/60)
Race 2 Steve Tandy (Peugeot 90X)

EQUIPE GTS
Christian Douglas (TVR Griffith)

TOURING CAR CHALLENGE
Race 1 Daniel Brown (Ford Sierra Cosworth)
Race 2 Glenn Dudley (Lola Wright)

GENTLEMEN DRIVERS
John Davison (TVR Griffith)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

SPIN AND WIN FOR DAVISON

Davison recovered from spin and a penalty

The 90-minute Gentlemen Drivers race was won by John Davison's TVR Griffith after an incredible fightback following a spin and then a drivethrough penalty for overtaking on the green-flag lap.

His recovery was a masterclass in both patience and ruthlessness, knowing when to take the opportunity to pass his rivals, having regained the lead just three laps from the end.

Long-time leader Mike Whitaker had started to lose the brakes on his Griffith having repelled a strong challenge from the Shelby American Cobra Daytona of Roy Alderslade and Andrew Jordan.

The 2013 British Touring Car champion had briefly taken the lead late on but a sudden puncture meant a quick trip across the grass coming into Surtees and a second visit to the pits. A one-lap penalty for taking a short lap took away any chance of a podium as the duo were classified eighth.

The battle for the final spot on the podium initially went to a photo finish between the Lotus Elan of Sam and John Tordoff and the Ron Maydon/Robin Ward-piloted Ginetta G4R, before the Elan duo were handed a 32s penalty for causing a collision, which dropped them to seventh.

Tordoff Jr had done an excellent job of bringing the Elan back into contention from the back of the grid, while Maydon did well to brush off the attentions of much more powerful cars.

This included the Cobra of Charles Allison and Peter Thompson, half a second faster per lap at its quickest, which finished fourth, ahead of Nick Sleep and Joel Wykeham (Cobra) and Callum Grant's Marcos in sixth.

A glance at the timesheets suggest Whitaker had dominated the race, but the truth was far from it. The similar machine of John Spiers and Nigel Greensall was in with a chance and even set the fastest lap up to that point in the race before the Griffith was launched into the gravel at Paddock Hill Bend. The car was recovered during a safety car period and Greensall rejoined, but was not classified at the end.

Mark Holme was the quickest of the Austin-Healey 3000s and finished ninth. He had a lengthy but clean tussle with Grant ahead of the pitstops, before Grant edged away. Guy Ziser's Jaguar E-type, co-piloted by World Endurance Championship racer Oliver Webb, was the leading Class B car and 12th overall.

RACHEL HARRIS-GARDINER

Jordan briefly took lead before suffering puncture

Fanbelt issue halted Hiley's Sport Specials charge

STEVE JONES

Stacey aces Croft Club Enduro finale

CROFT
750MC
28-29 MAY

Robbed of Saturday's Roadsports victory when his Lotus Elise's sequential gearbox jammed in fourth, Will Stacey's Rob Boston Racing crew installed the original H-pattern box for him to win Sunday's sensational 125-minute Club Enduro finale at Croft. In a breathless four-lap sprint to the chequer after a late safety-car interlude, Stacey beat the SEAT Leon TCRs of Scot Colin Gillespie and Carl Swift by five seconds.

Initial leader Andy Marston's BMW E46 M3 survived a biff from Ryan Parkin's Audi TT under waved yellows on lap two, which brought exclusion post-race, but retired after another collision, leaving Andy Schulz's E46 M3 ahead until it shed a front wheel at Clervaux. The Parkin/Adam Blair TT was then clear until an intermittent problem worsened.

Stacey tore ahead, carving through the superb pack before incidents at Clervaux and the Jim Clark Esses forced the caution that brought Gillespie onto his tail. "I backed Colin up in the complex, where I was quicker, then went flat-out," he said as Gillespie staved off Swift, whose Area Motorsport version was delayed by a rear puncture, plus a 30s Donington Park winner's penalty.

A broken rear hub stopped Class B leader Jonathan Packer's Area VW Golf, leaving team-mate Luke Handley, whose Golf's temperature sensor backed the engine off by 50bhp, to beat Chris Plaskett's sister car.

With Schulz's M3 out after a lap with fly-by-wire throttle-sensor issues, five Lotuses — Stacey, Leon Bidgway, Rob Boston, Nicole Drought and Jonathan Weston-Taylor — chasing Marston's bewinged M3 in Saturday's 45-minute Roadsports race promised much. But red flags flew when Giles Kirk's SEAT got lost in the Jim Clark Esses greenery.

After the restart, Stacey passed Welshman Bidgway and led until his transmission glitched, whereupon Bidgway's turbocharged Exige sizzled to victory. Marston/Brett Evans, Class B winner Boston (Elise) and the Area Golfs of Packer and Chris Freeman led the chase. Ed Turner (BMW 330Ci) beat Aaron Cooke (Toyota GT86) to Class C by 1.35s.

Matthew Booth, reigning champion Lee Morgan (in Perpetuum team-mate Andrew Wheals's car) and Croft top scorer Rob Welham each won in F1000 over an arduous weekend. Silverstone victors Booth (suspension joint) and points leader Tom Gadd (driveshaft) both retired from race two, from which Dan Gore crashed out at Clervaux. Sixteen-year-old Murfie Aldridge's third, his first podium, in that race was impressive.

Craig Pollard extended his Formula Vee win streak to three on Saturday, and from 17th finished third in Sunday's monsoon, but was later excluded for an exhaust infringement. James Harridge's Maverick's gear linkage broke in qualifying and Saturday's race, but his progress from the back to third in a lap was astonishing. Having outbraked himself passing Danny Hands's AHS Dominator for the lead at Clervaux, he skittered through the gravel but, despite protestations, the result stood.

Andy Hiley's Sport Specials domination looked set to continue before his Chronos threw its fanbelt in the opener, forcing retirement. Pursuer Lewis Ward was overjoyed with his first win in Premier Wheels's Westfield. Hiley won the sequel, in which Ward's 1m25.93s final shot erased Hiley's new record.

Scott Austin was Alfa Romeo top gun, slick front tyres and wet rears proving ideal on Sunday, when V6 winner Tom Hill led for a precious few metres. Eight of the 11 runners scrapped for third. After Gabriele Iaccarino shunted at Sunny, Graham Seager

STEVE JONES

Stacey defied the Leon TCRs to take Club Enduro spoils

WEEKEND WINNERS

CROFT

CLUB ENDURO
Will Stacey (Lotus Elise)

ROADSPORTS
Leon Bidgway (Lotus Exige)

F1000
Race 1 Matthew Booth
Race 2 Lee Morgan
Race 3 Rob Welham

FORMULA VEE
Race 1 Craig Pollard (WEV)
Race 2 James Harridge (Maverick)

SPORT SPECIALS
Race 1 Lewis Ward (Westfield SEiW)
Race 2 Andy Hiley (Chronos HR1S)

ALFA ROMEOS
Races 1 & 2 Scott Austin (156)

TOYOTA MR2s
Race 1 Ali Topley (Mk2)
Race 2 Shaun Traynor (Roadster)

ARMED FORCES RACE CHALLENGE
Races 1 & 2 Mark Inman (Caterham Sigmax)

For full results visit: 750mc.co.uk

KIRKISTOWN

FORMULA FORD 1600
Races 1 & 2 David McCullough (Van Diemen RF01)

FIESTA ZETECS
Races 1 & 2 Derek Graham

ROADSPORTS
Races 1 & 2 Steven Larkham (Radical PR06)

SALOONS/GT
Races 1 & 2 Peter Baxter (SEAT Leon)

FORMULA SHEANE
Races 1 & 2 Richard Kearney

For full results visit: speedhive.mylaps.com

and Andy Inman held sway from Andrew Bourke, Jon Billingsley and the *fratelli* Ford, split by Toby Broome.

Ali Topley and Shaun Traynor disputed Sunday's Toyota MR2 opener in contrasting cars having passed poleman Aaron Cooke, Topley just edging it. Traynor won the sequel with Cooke closing in as a wheel vibration played on his mind.

Mark Inman's Caterham won the subdued Armed Forces Race Challenges, quelling Simon Wing's flame-throwing Peugeot 205 initially. Wing withdrew from race two, promoting the renewed BMW duel between Jason Holyhead (E36 M3) and Stuart Pywell (125i). Holyhead gifted birthday boy Pywell second on the line.

MARCUS PYE

McCullough was among last weekend's double winners

The repeated winners story continues at Kirkistown

KIRKISTOWN
500MRCI
28 MAY

This is getting to be a habit. The five classes contesting double-headers at Kirkistown on Saturday again produced five back-to-back winners. And that could have been boring – but it wasn't, mainly thanks to the efforts of the runners-up.

In Formula Ford, while David McCullough steamed off in front, an all-Mondiale battle for second between Alan Davidson and Brandon McCaughan almost reduced the commentators to hysterics as the pair fought tooth and nail for every inch of Tarmac for lap after lap.

It looked as though McCaughan had it sorted early in race one with a mighty outbraking move on his rival, only to have Davidson return the favour on the final tour. McCaughan was again in front in race two, but an audacious pass at the dauntingly fast Debtors Dip left-hander put Davidson ahead again when it mattered.

The Fiestas rose to the occasion too and, while the wily Derek Graham established himself at the front, son Michael, Mark and Paul Stewart and Neville Anderson gave the crowd plenty to shout about. Anderson eventually placed second in race one ahead of Mark Stewart, while Graham Jr was removed from the results after a nerfing match with Paul Stewart. Mark Stewart claimed the race-two runner-up spot from Anderson with Graham Jr and his brother in attendance, but a sizeable blanket could have covered them all.

Poleman Steven Larkham took some time getting his Radical PR06 off the line in both Roadsports races, letting Jim Larkham assume the lead. But when Steven got moving it all changed, and nephew soon passed uncle to score a brace of victories, lowering Jim Hutchinson's decade-old lap record in the process. John Stewart (PR06) placed third in race one, but slid off in the second contest, allowing John Benson's S2000 Crossle to claim third.

Peter Baxter's SEAT was another tardy starter, but he soon got ahead of Paul Parr's SHP Supercar in both Saloon/GT affairs to score another double. The concurrent Mazda MX-5 encounter provided some variety, with a win apiece for David Cousins and Gavin Kilkey.

Richard Kearney always goes well at Kirkistown, and he did the double again in Formula Sheane. Tom Foley and Garrett McKenna were the runners-up first time around, while Mark Keenan and Chris Dunne were on the podium later.

RICHARD YOUNG

Steven Larkham twice got the better of his uncle

Wheeler gets the better of touring car legends

Reid (right) couldn't win the second Super Tourer race as Wheeler pounced

OULTON PARK
BARC
28 MAY

The pupil upstaged the master as Richard Wheeler passed Anthony Reid's sister Nissan Primera to win Oulton Park's second Super Tourers race. Brisky Racing boss Wheeler had never raced at the Cheshire circuit, but a trackday run in an Abarth 500 followed by Reid showing him some lines in Friday testing culminated in his charge from fifth on the grid.

Wheeler passed Tony Absolom's Vauxhall Cavalier off the line, then dived inside John Cleland (Cavalier) and Mark Jones (Renault Laguna) on consecutive tours at Druids and Lodge. His quest was completed by outbraking Reid into Hislop's on lap six of nine, before Reid's fading brakes caused a last-lap Cascades spin.

"To go from fifth to first, past Cleland and Reid, I don't really know where it came from," said Wheeler. "To come from watching touring cars years ago to driving them, and then be out with those guys and actually win a race, what can you say?"

Reid earlier passed Jones around the outside at Lodge to win an opening race with little green-flag running after Andrew Strachan (Ford Mondeo) crashed at Druids and Robert Salisbury (Honda Accord) spun at Knickerbrook. Wheeler had led polesitter Jones before a combination of cold tyres and a rearward brake bias caused him to spin.

Gary Prebble's Honda Civic mixed it with the Super Tourers as he twice dominated the Pre-'03 Touring Car field.

After harrying Alan Greenhalgh's Ford Falcon throughout the opener, Barry Sime won the second Pre-'66 Touring Car race in his Mini. Sime thrilled the crowd as he dispatched Tim Scott Andrews's fast-starting Falcon at Cascades, then twice fought back into Old Hall when Greenhalgh and Piers Grange (Ford Mustang) outdragged him across the grid hatchings.

Greenhalgh's last-lap attack up Clay Hill ended when he bounced over the grass and into the wall. Simultaneously, Grange shed a wheel, which sent Roger Stanford's Lotus Cortina into the barriers and rolling in avoidance, truncating the race.

Local man Ric Wood's mighty Holden Commodore twice defeated Jason Davies's Ford Sierra Cosworth in Classic Thunder. Wood's ex-Brad Jones Racing machine, sporting Garth Tander's HRT livery, took the opener unchallenged, while Davies recovered from a lowly grid slot after shedding a power-steering belt in qualifying.

Engine expert Wood was pushed harder in the sequel, and the pair ran side by side through Old Hall and Dentons before Davies edged ahead. Wood bided his time and, as the turbocharged Sierra began to fade, roared around the outside of Old Hall to secure a repeat.

Wood also starred in the Sports/Saloon series he sponsors but, starting last, he was unable to catch Jon Woolfitt's Spire GT-R or Paul Dobson's rotary Mazda-powered Locost. Wood used qualifying to test his Calsonic-liveried Nissan Skyline ahead of a busy summer spell, before switching to the Commodore. Third (within a lap) was as far as he could rise.

Tom Robinson made it five from five in the opening Jaguar Challenge contest, James Ramm following in a haze of Robinson's power-steering fluid. Ramm got the jump in race two, while Robinson wrestled the supercharged XJR6 to third behind Colin Philpott's XJS.

Dave Griffin eased to victory in Pre-'93 Touring Cars, with Stephen Primett (Ford Escort Mk1) unthreatened in the Pre-'83 section, before the second race was lost to time constraints.

MARK PAULSON

WEEKEND WINNERS

SUPER TOURERS/PRE-'03 TOURING CARS
Race 1 Anthony Reid (Nissan Primera GT)
Race 2 Richard Wheeler (Nissan Primera GT)

PRE-'66 TOURING CARS
Race 1 Alan Greenhalgh (Ford Falcon Sprint)
Race 2 Barry Sime (Morris Mini Cooper S)

CLASSIC THUNDER/BOSS
Races 1 & 2 Ric Wood (Holden Commodore)

CNC HEADS SPORTS/SALOONS
Jon Woolfitt (Spire GT-R, below)

JAGUAR CHALLENGE
Race 1 Tom Robinson (XJR6)
Race 2 James Ramm (XJS)

PRE-'83 & PRE-'93 TOURING CARS
Dave Griffin (BMW E36 M3)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

Sun shines on Summers up Wiltshire hill

GURSTON DOWN
BRITISH HILLCLIMB
28-29 MAY

The balance of power in the British Hillclimb Championship swung towards Alex Summers at Gurston Down after four championship run-offs.

With 44 points available, it was always going to be a key weekend and it was Summers who came good at the perfect moment. He won the first three run-offs, adding an extra point in the second and third contests for bettering the year-old outright hill record.

But on Sunday afternoon, it was Scott Moran who came to the fore with an attacking run to bag win number four. Erstwhile points leader Wallace Menzies was also in contention as the top three drivers eased clear of the pack, but he had to be content with three seconds and a third from his weekend.

Summers arrived at the Wiltshire hill with high expectations after a big team effort had found his Cosworth IndyCar engine another 1000rpm. On Saturday, Summers qualified fastest and so ran last in the opening run-off. He watched as Moran set a 25.49s and Menzies a 25.40s, as they got close to the latter's year-old outright record of 25.34s. And that was exactly the time that Summers clocked to win the first run-off.

In the afternoon Summers stitched it all together for a stunning 25.05s to make it two wins. "The car has always handled brilliantly but it's taken a lot of work to optimise the engine," he said.

Trevor Willis, Matthew Ryder, Will Hall and Graham Wynn filled the top 10 in their big-engined cars, while from the smaller-engined ranks Richard Spedding, Lee Griffiths, David Warburton and the Greenen brothers, Adam and Andy, all bagged points.

Sunday dawned cooler with the potential for rain later in the day, but that didn't hurt the pace of the first run-off. Menzies matched his Saturday 25.32s climb only to watch Summers charge to 25.00s to complete a hat-trick. Moran was half a second back on 25.87s from Ryder, Dave Uren and Willis.

In the fourth and final run-off, Menzies clocked a 25.92s but then Moran went up in 25.47s in what was an incredibly consistent weekend for the former multiple champion.

Summers ran last but didn't quite get the launch he wanted, and went through the finish at 25.54s to leave Moran with the weekend's final victory. "That's more like it," said Moran. "I just looked at the data and pulled my finger out."

"We've made a real breakthrough this weekend and when you get beaten by Scott, it's no disgrace," said Summers, who scored 41 out of 44 possible points.

Menzies was quick to congratulate his rivals, and he now trails Summers by two points. "Fair play to Alex and Scott," he said. "They fully deserved it. It's been a really good competition."

PAUL LAWRENCE

PAUL LAWRENCE

Summers took three run-off victories

PAUL LAWRENCE

Moran managed to stop a Summers clean sweep

RESULTS

ROUND 7
1 Alex Summers (2.7 DJ-Cosworth Firestorm) 25.34s; 2 Wallace Menzies (3.3 Gould-Cosworth GR59M) 25.40s; 3 Scott Moran (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59J) 25.49s; 4 Trevor Willis (3.2 OMS 28-RTE) 26.45s; 5 Matthew Ryder (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59JB) 26.56s; 6 David Uren (3.5 Gould-NME GR55B) 26.98s; 7 Graham Wynn (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59J) 27.74s; 8 Richard Spedding (1.6 GWR-Hayabusa Raptor 2) 28.02s; 9 Lee Griffiths (1.7 OMS 25-Suzuki) 28.40s; 10 David Warburton (1.6 Gould-Suzuki GR59) 28.44s.

ROUND 8
1 Summers 25.05s; 2 Menzies 25.32s; 3 Moran 25.40s; 4 Willis 26.34s; 5 Ryder 26.38s; 6 Will Hall (4.0 Gould-Judd GR59JB) 27.33s; 7 Wynn 27.54s; 8 Adam Greenen (1.6 Empire-Hayabusa EVO3) 27.65s; 9 Warburton 28.13s; 10 Andy Greenen (1.6 Empire-Hayabusa EVO3) 28.35s.

ROUND 9
1 Summers 25.00s; 2 Menzies 25.32s; 3 Moran 25.87s; 4 Ryder 26.15s; 5 Uren 26.30s; 6 Willis 26.60s; 7 Hall 27.64s; 8 Jack Cottrill (2.7 DJ-Cosworth Dallara) 27.80s; 9 Andy Greenen 28.01s; 10 Spedding 28.44s.

ROUND 10
1 Moran 25.47s; 2 Summers 25.54s; 3 Menzies 25.92s; 4 Uren 26.31s; 5 Ryder 26.87s; 6 Hall 27.09s; 7 Willis 27.14s; 8 Wynn 27.67s; 9 Cottrill 27.78s; 10 Andy Greenen 28.04s.

POINTS
1 Summers 95; 2 Menzies 93; 3 Moran 88; 4 Ryder 67; 5 Willis 63; 6 Uren 49.

For full results visit: britishhillclimb.co.uk

FINISHING STRAIGHT

Updated game will get your virtual BTCC career off the ground

A BTCC treat for gaming fans

VIDEO GAME
RFACTOR 2
BTCC CONTENT PACK (AVAILABLE ON PC)
RRP £26.61

Although the racing simulator rFactor 2 was first released in 2013, its progress in terms of development and content has often been disappointingly slow. In recent times, however, Studio 397 has announced a spate of new content and quality of life improvements.

The driving platform's latest additional content pack brings the Infiniti Q50 and Toyota Corolla GR Sport from the British Touring Car Championship to the game, complemented by laser-scanned versions of Donington Park and Brands Hatch.

The Infiniti at Donington hits the mark immediately. The engine sound from the cockpit evokes a live onboard from an actual TV broadcast, immersing the player in the world of the popular tin-top series from the outset, with a hint of transmission whine and accompanying turbocharged drone.

On cold tyres, the rear-wheel-drive saloon understeers at the corner entry, but retains oversteer tendencies when the throttle is applied, even as tyre temperatures build. Trying to control it on the limit is satisfying but demands quick reactions and the driver's full attention — especially in the rain.

As far as the track is concerned, Donington has been recreated in minute detail, its location next to East Midlands Airport punctuated by regular in-game aircraft appearances. The National and Grand Prix layouts are included, with the hazardous chicane tyre stacks thankfully omitted. In their place the game has placed draconian track limit warnings, which feel a little unfair given how much kerb real-world BTCC drivers use.

Players can choose from soft, medium, hard and wet-compound tyres on both cars, implemented using data supplied by Goodyear tyre technicians. Realism is enhanced by a multitude of car set-up options — the full gamut of suspension adjustments can be made alongside changeable gear ratios and wing levels.

Differential power, coast and preload values can also be amended, thanks to data obtained from the development team's close collaboration with BTCC race engineers.

The Toyota is a different prospect to the Infiniti. Being front-wheel drive, it proves to be reassuringly stable over kerbs, in direct contrast to the slightly lairy Infiniti. The Corolla also reacts keenly when trail braking and traction is not as big an issue post-apex.

Before the tyres reach their ideal operating temperatures, the hatchback suffers from extreme torque steer and lift-off oversteer, which is a realistic front-wheel-drive touring car trait. But after a resplendently leafy warm-up lap on Brands Hatch's Grand Prix circuit, the Toyota feels much more compliant, and thanks to its drivetrain layout can be leaned on more than the Infiniti, especially in changeable conditions.

The Indy layout proves to be a bigger test of concentration, however. With no time to relax between corners it's difficult to spot details such as the glint of sunlight from the Motorsport Vision Centre's glazed exterior, but the track, like Donington, is faithfully reproduced in virtual form.

Both cars react well to smooth inputs — witness four-time champion Colin Turkington's relaxed style for inspiration — with short-shifting helping to eliminate wheelspin, vital when exiting Druids hairpin with 370bhp on tap.

While the cockpit sounds in both cars are immersive, they lack punch externally, which anyone who has ever spectated at a BTCC meeting will attest can be ear-piercingly loud.

Force feedback using a steering wheel and pedal set-up — almost vital for a racing simulator such as rFactor 2 — is weighty, realistically depicting the hydraulic power-steering systems and 1240kg minimum weight of the real-world touring cars. Both are a treat to drive.

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY RFACTOR

Toyota looks at home in all-too-common British weather

Infiniti offers realistic rear-drive handling

These new cars and tracks for gaming PC owners are the only way championship followers can access official virtual content for the time being. With further BTCC cars set to follow later this year for the platform – plus a 2022 livery update – fans have more to look forward to, especially if the developers can match the quality of the Infiniti and Toyota.

ROSS McGREGOR

For daily racing game news, visit https://traxion.gg/

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Rally Italy
World Rally Championship
Round 5/13
Sardinia, Italy
2-5 June
TV **Live** BT Sport 3, Thu 1700, Sat 1230, BT Sport 2, Sat 1500, BT Sport 3, Sun 0800, Sun 1100
TV **Highlights** BT Sport 3, Fri 2300, BT Sport 2, Sat 2230, BT Sport 3, Sun 2000, Red Bull TV, Fri 2100, Sat 2100, Sun 2100

Formula E
Round 6/10
Jakarta, Indonesia
4 June
TV **Live** Channel 4, Sat 0830, Eurosport 2, Sat 0830

IndyCar Series
Round 7/16
Detroit Belle Isle, USA
5 June
TV **Live** Sky Sports F1, Sun 2000

GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup
Round 2/5
Paul Ricard, France
5 June

GT4 European Series
Round 2/6
Paul Ricard, France
4-5 June
Livestream on motorsport.tv, Sat 0920, Sat 1505, Sun 1010

Formula Regional Euro
Round 4/10
Paul Ricard, France
4-5 June

Indy Lights
Round 4/11
Detroit Belle Isle, USA
4-5 June

IMSA SportsCar
Round 6/12
Detroit Belle Isle, USA
4 June

NASCAR Cup Series
Round 15/36
Gateway, USA
5 June
TV **Live** Free Sports, Sun 2000

NASCAR Truck Series
Round 11/23
Gateway, USA
4 June

NASCAR Xfinity Series
Round 14/33
Portland, USA
4 June

MotoGP
Round 9/20
Barcelona, Spain
5 June
TV **Live** BT Sport 2, Sun 1230
TV **Highlights** ITV4, Mon 2000

UK MOTORSPORT

Anglesey MSVR
2-3 June
Elise Trophy, EnduroKa, MSVT Trackday Championship, MSVT Trackday Trophy, Turismo X

Brands Hatch CSCC
3-4 June
Classic K, Future Classics, Magnificent Sevens, Modern Classics, New Millennium, Open Series, Slicks Series, Swinging Sixties, Special Saloons & Modsports, Turbo Tin Tops

Cadwell Park HSCC
4-5 June
'70s Roadsports/'80s Sports & GT, Classic Clubmans, Classic FF1600, Historic FF1600, Historic FF2000, Historic Formula Junior, Historic Modsports & Saloons/ Historic Touring Cars, Historic Roadsports, Northern Saloons & Sports Cars

Silverstone BARC
4-5 June
2CVs, Britcar Trophy, Hyundai Coupe Cup, JSCC, Kumho BMWs, MGOC, Praga Cup
Livestream via barc.net

Knockhill KMSC
4-5 June
Caterham Graduates, Modsports, Scottish Legends, Super Lap Scotland, VW Cup

Donington Park VSCC
5 June
Allcomers, F3 500s, Handicap, Pre-'35 Grand Prix Cars, Pre-'66 Racing Cars, Pre-War Sports Cars, VSCC Specials

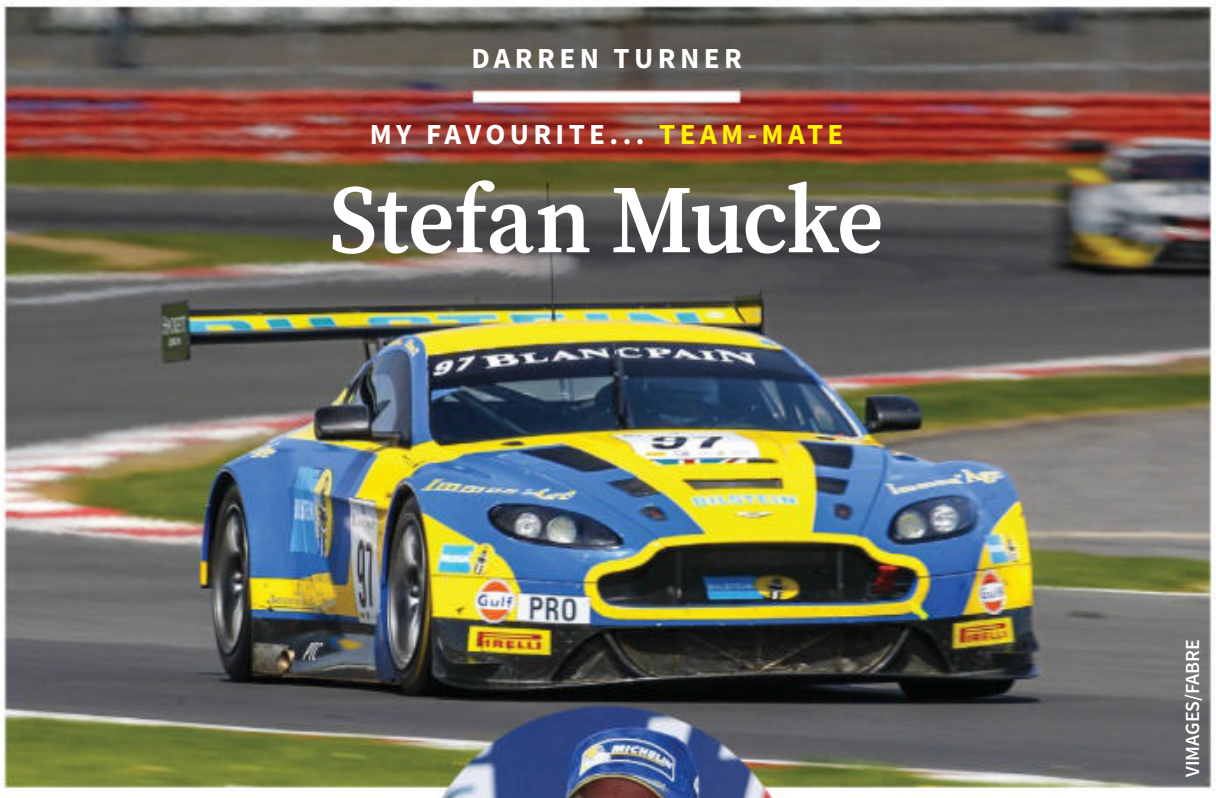
Shelsley Walsh
4-5 June
British Hillclimb Championship Round 5/13

Mondello Park
4-5 June
British Rallycross Championship Round 4/7

DARREN TURNER

MY FAVOURITE... TEAM-MATE

Stefan Mucke



VIMAGES/FABRE

INSET: JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

In his 17-year stint as an Aston Martin factory driver, Darren Turner has by his own admission "been really lucky with team-mates" who have helped him to secure three class victories at Le Mans and a glittering array of honours across multiple championships. But, for Turner, his choice of Stefan Mucke as his favourite team-mate is determined not just by "the bit that's in the garage – there's so much more to it".

"We travel a lot and that's something that's not always recognised when the question is asked about your team-mate," he says. And Turner was "nearly always on the same page" as Mucke, his regular co-driver between 2011 and 2015, as they had a "similar passion about old cars, how things work and optimisation".

"His logic was the same as my logic, which isn't always the same with lots of drivers," he recalls. "Everyone thinks differently about finding a solution."

Turner reckons they also "had a very similar sort of feel for what the car balance should be", which proved crucial in six GTE Pro class wins in the WEC between 2012 and 2014, in addition to outright wins in the GT1 World Championship (Beijing Goldenport, 2011) and Blancpain Endurance Series (Silverstone, 2013).

"That really helps when you sit down and you have trust that the other driver is giving feedback which is beneficial to you as well," he says. "You don't even have to be there when he's having that conversation, because you know it's going in the right direction."

The social element of travelling around "and the fun we used to get up to on the way to circuits, at circuits, back at the hotels" made their working relationship thrive. Even when problems arose, Turner "had his back because I knew he had my back".

"We all make mistakes and having someone who is there on your bad day is what makes a really good team-mate, and that's the trust that me and Stefan had," he reveals. "We've got a friendship that will last us into our old age, way past when we retire from driving."

JAMES NEWBOLD

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

2022 Le Mans preview

OUR 52-PAGE GUIDE TO THE GREATEST ENDURANCE RACE

JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

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